Henrik Ibsen

Audrey L Jones

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THE COLLECTED WORKS OF
HENRIK IBSEN

VOLUME VII

A DOLL'S HOUSE
GHOSTS

THE COLLECTED WORKS OF

HENRIK IBSEN

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THE COLLECTED WORKS OF

HENRIK IBSEN

COPYRIGHT EDITION

VOLUME VII

A DOLL'S HOUSE
GHOSTS

WITH INTRODUCTIONS BY

WILLIAM ARCHER

NEW YORK
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1907

INTRODUCTIONS BY WILLIAM ARCHER

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A DOLL'S HOUSE.

INTRODUCTION.*

On June 27, 1879, Ibsen wrote from Rome to Marcus Grönvold: "It is now rather hot in Rome, so in about a week we are going to Amalfi, which, being close to the sea, is cooler, and offers opportunity for bathing. I intend to complete there a new dramatic work on which I am now engaged." From Amalfi, on September 20, he wrote to John Paulsen: "A new dramatic work, which I have just completed, has occupied so much of my time during these last months that I have had absolutely none to spare for answering letters." This "new dramatic work" was *Et Dukkehjem*, which was published in Copenhagen, December 4, 1879. Dr. Georg Brandes has given some account of the episode in real life which suggested to Ibsen the plot of this play; but the real Nora, it appears, committed forgery, not to save her husband's life, but to redecorate her house. The impulse received from this incident must have been trifling. It is much more to the purpose to remember that the character and situation of Nora had been clearly foreshadowed, ten years ear-

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lier, in the figure of Selma in *The League of Youth.*

It is with *A Doll's House* that Ibsen enters upon his kingdom as a world-poet. He had done greater work in the past, and he was to do greater work in the future; but this was the play which was destined to carry his name beyond the limits of Scandinavia, and even of Germany, to the remotest regions of civilisation. Here the Fates were not altogether kind to him. The fact that for many years he was known to thousands of people solely as the author of *A Doll's House*, and its successor, *Ghosts*, was largely responsible for the extravagant misconceptions of his genius and character which prevailed during the last decade of the nineteenth century, and are not yet entirely extinct. In these plays he seemed to be delivering a direct assault on marriage, from the standpoint of feminine individualism; wherefore he was taken to be a preacher and pamphleteer rather than a poet. In these plays, and in these only, he made physical disease a considerable factor in the action; whence it was concluded that he had a morbid predilection for "nauseous" subjects. In these plays he laid special and perhaps disproportionate stress on the influence of heredity; whence he was believed to be possessed by a monomania on the point. In these plays, finally, he was trying to act the essentially uncongenial part of the prosaic realist. The effort broke down at many points, and the poet reasserted himself; but these flaws in the prosaic texture were regarded as mere bewildering errors and eccentricities. In short, he was in-

troduced to the world at large through two plays which showed his power, indeed, almost in perfection, but left the higher and subtler qualities of his genius for the most part unrepresented. Hence the grotesquely distorted vision of him which for so long haunted the minds even of intelligent people. Hence, for example, the amazing opinion, given forth as a truism by more than one critic of great ability, that the author of *Peer Gynt* was devoid of humour.

Within a little more than a fortnight of its publication *A Doll's House* was presented at the Royal Theatre, Copenhagen, where Fru Hennings, as Nora, made the great success of her career. The play was soon being acted, as well as read, all over Scandinavia. Nora's startling "declaration of independence" afforded such an inexhaustible theme for heated discussion, that at last it had to be formally barred at social gatherings, just as, in Paris twenty years later, the Dreyfus Case was proclaimed a prohibited topic. The popularity of *Pillars of Society* in Germany had paved the way for its successor, which spread far and wide over the German stage in the spring of 1880, and has ever since held its place in the repertory of the leading theatres. As his works were at that time wholly unprotected in Germany, Ibsen could not prevent managers from altering the end of the play to suit their taste and fancy. He was thus driven, under protest, to write an alternative ending, in which, at the last moment, the thought of her children restrained Nora from leaving home. He preferred, as he said, "to commit the outrage himself, rather than leave

his work to the tender mercies of adaptors." The patched-up ending soon dropped out of use and out of memory. Ibsen's own account of the matter will be found in his *Correspondence*, Letter 142.

It took ten years for the play to pass beyond the limits of Scandinavia and Germany. Madame Modjeska, it is true, presented a version of it in Louisville, Kentucky, in 1883, but it attracted no attention. In the following year Messrs. Henry Arthur Jones and Henry Herman produced at the Prince of Wales's Theatre, London, a play entitled *Breaking a Butterfly*, which was described as being "founded on Ibsen's *Norah*," but bore only a remote resemblance to the original. In this production Mr. Beerbohm Tree took the part of Dunkley, a melodramatic villain who filled the place of Krogstad. In 1885, again, an adventurous amateur club gave a quaint performance of Miss Lord's translation of the play at a hall in Argyle Street, London. Not until June 7, 1889, was a *A Doll's House* competently, and even brilliantly, presented to the English public, by Mr. Charles Charrington and Miss Janet Achurch, at the Novelty Theatre, London, afterwards re-named the Great Queen Street Theatre. It was this production that really made Ibsen known to the English-speaking peoples. In other words, it marked his second great stride towards world-wide, as distinct from merely national, renown—if we reckon as the first stride the success of *Pillars of Society* in Germany. Mr. and Mrs. Charrington took *A Doll's House* with them on a long Australian

tour; Miss Beatrice Cameron (Mrs. Richard Mansfield) was encouraged by the success of the London production to present the play in New York, whence it soon spread to other American cities; while in London itself it was frequently revived and vehemently discussed. The Ibsen controversy, indeed, did not break out in its full virulence until 1891, when *Ghosts* and *Hedda Gabler* were produced in London; but from the date of the Novelty production onwards, Ibsen was generally recognised as a potent factor in the intellectual and artistic life of the day.

A French adaptation of *Et Dukkehjem* was produced in Brussels in March 1889, but attracted little attention. Not until 1894 was the play introduced to the Parisian public, at the Gymnase, with Madame Réjane as Nora. This actress has since played the part frequently, not only in Paris but in London and in America. In Italian the play was first produced in 1889, and soon passed into the repertory of Eleonora Duse, who appeared as Nora in London in 1893. Few heroines in modern drama have been played by so many actresses of the first rank. To those already enumerated must be added Hedwig Niemann-Raabe and Agnes Sorma in Germany, and Minnie Maddern-Fiske in America; and, even so, the list is far from complete. There is probably no country in the world, possessing a theatre on the European model, in which *A Doll's House* has not been more or less frequently acted.

Undoubtedly the great attraction of the part of Nora to the average actress was the tarantella scene. This was a theatrical effect, of an

obvious, unmistakable kind. It might have been —though I am not aware that it ever actually was—made the subject of a picture-poster. But this, as it seems to me, was Ibsen's last concession to the ideal of technique which he had acquired, in the old Bergen days, from his French masters. I have elsewhere * analysed *A Doll's House* at some length, from the technical point of view, suggesting that it marks a distinct, and one might almost say a sudden, revolution in the poet's understanding of the methods and aims of his art. There is pretty good reason to suppose, as it seems to me, that he altered the plan of the play while it was actually in process of composition. He seems originally to have schemed a "happy ending," like that of *The League of Youth* or *Pillars of Society*. No doubt it is convenient, even for the purposes of the play as it stands, that all fear of hostile action on Krogstad's part should be dissipated before Nora and Helmer settle down to their final explanation; but is the convenience sufficiently great to account for the invention, to that end alone, of Mrs. Linden's relation to, and influence over, Krogstad? I very much question it. I think the "happy ending" which is actually reached when Krogstad returns the forged document was, in Ibsen's original conception, intended to be equivalent to the stopping of the *Indian Girl*, and the return of Olaf, in *Pillars of Society*—that is to say, it was to be the end of the drama properly so called, and the rest was to be a more or less conventional winding-up, a confession of faults on both sides,

* *Fortnightly Review*, July 1906.

accompanied by mutual congratulations on the blowing-over of the threatened storm. This is the end which, as we see, every one expected: the end which adaptors, in Germany, England, and elsewhere, insisted on giving to the play. There was just a shade of excuse for these gentlemen, inasmuch as the poet himself seemed to have elaborately prepared the way for them; and I suggest that the fact of his having done so shows that the play, in embryo, passed through the phase of technical development represented by *Pillars of Society*—the phase to which its amenders would have forced it to return. Ibsen, on the other hand, when he proceeded from planning in outline to creation in detail, found his characters outgrow his plot. When the action, in the theatrical sense, was over, they were only on the threshold of the essential drama; and in that drama, compressed into the final scene of the play, Ibsen found his true power and his true mission.

How impossible, in his subsequent work, would be such figures as Mrs. Linden, the confidant, and Krogstad, the villain! They are not quite the ordinary confidant and villain, for Ibsen is always Ibsen, and his power of vitalisation is extraordinary. Yet we clearly feel them to belong to a different order of art from that of his later plays. How impossible, too, in the poet's after years, would have been the little tricks of ironic coincidence and picturesque contrast which abound in *A Doll's House!* The festal atmosphere of the whole play, the Christmas-tree, the tarantella, the masquerade ball, with its distant sounds of music—all the shim-

mer and tinsel of the background against which Nora's soul-torture and Rank's despair are thrown into relief belong to the system of external, artificial antithesis beloved by romantic playwrights from Lope de Vega onward, and carried to its limit by Victor Hugo. The same artificiality is apparent in minor details. "Oh, what a wonderful thing it is to live to be happy!" cries Nora, and instantly "The hall-door bell rings" and Krogstad's shadow falls across the threshold. So, too, for his second entrance, an elaborate effect of contrast is arranged, between Nora's gleeful romp with her children and the sinister figure which stands unannounced in their midst. It would be too much to call these things absolutely unnatural, but the very precision of the coincidence is eloquent of pre-arrangement. At any rate, they belong to an order of effects which in future Ibsen sedulously eschews. The one apparent exception to this rule which I can remember occurs in *The Master Builder*, where Solness's remark, "Presently the younger generation will come knocking at my door," gives the cue for Hilda's knock and entrance. But here an interesting distinction is to be noted. Throughout *The Master Builder* the poet subtly indicates the operation of mysterious, unseen agencies—the "helpers and servers" of whom Solness speaks, as well as the Power with which he held converse at the crisis in his life—guiding, or at any rate tampering with, the destinies of the characters. This being so, it is evident that the effect of pre-arrangement produced by Hilda's appearing exactly on the given cue was delib-

erately aimed at. Like so many other details in the play, it might be a mere coincidence, or it might be a result of inscrutable design—we were purposely left in doubt. But the suggestion of pre-arrangement which helped to create the atmosphere of *The Master Builder* was wholly out of place in *A Doll's House*. In the later play it was a subtle stroke of art; in the earlier it was the effect of imperfectly dissembled artifice.

My conjecture of an actual modification of Ibsen's design during the progress of the play may possibly be mistaken. There can be no doubt, on the other hand, that Ibsen's full originality first reveals itself in the latter half of the third act. This is proved by the very protests, nay, the actual rebellion, which the last scene called forth. Up to that point he had been doing, approximately, what theatrical orthodoxy demanded of him. But when Nora, having put off her masquerade dress, returned to make up her account with Helmer, and with marriage as Helmer understood it, the poet flew in the face of orthodoxy, and its professors cried out in bewilderment and wrath. But it was just at this point that, in practice, the real grip and thrill of the drama were found to come in. The tarantella scene never, in my experience—and I have seen five or six great actresses in the part—produced an effect in any degree commensurate with the effort involved. But when Nora and Helmer faced each other, one on each side of the table, and set to work to ravel out the skein of their illusions, then one felt oneself face to face with a new thing in drama—an

order of experience, at once intellectual and emotional, not hitherto attained in the theatre. This every one felt, I think, who was in any way accessible to that order of experience. For my own part, I shall never forget how surprised I was on first seeing the play, to find this scene, in its naked simplicity, far more exciting and moving than all the artfully-arranged situations of the earlier acts. To the same effect, from another point of view, we have the testimony of Fru Hennings, the first actress who ever played the part of Nora. In an interview published soon after Ibsen's death, she spoke of the delight it was to her, in her youth, to embody the Nora of the first and second acts, the "lark," the "squirrel," the irresponsible, butterfly Nora. "When I now play the part," she went on, "the first acts leave me indifferent. Not until the third act am I really interested —but then, intensely." To call the first and second acts positively uninteresting would of course be a gross exaggeration. What one really means is that their workmanship is still a little derivative and immature, and that not until the third act does the poet reveal the full originality and individuality of his genius.

GHOSTS.

INTRODUCTION.*

The winter of 1879–80 Ibsen spent in Munich, and the greater part of the summer of 1880 at Berchtesgaden. November 1880 saw him back in Rome, and he passed the summer of 1881 at Sorrento. There, fourteen years earlier, he had written the last acts of *Peer Gynt*; there he now wrote, or at any rate completed, *Gengangere.* It was published in December 1881, after he had returned to Rome. On December 22 he wrote to Ludwig Passarge, one of his German translators, "My new play has now appeared, and has occasioned a terrible uproar in the Scandinavian press; every day I receive letters and newspaper articles decrying or praising it. . . . I consider it utterly impossible that any German theatre will accept the play at present. I hardly believe that they will dare to play it in the Scandinavian countries for some time to come." How rightly he judged we shall see anon.

In the newspapers there was far more obloquy than praise. Two men, however, stood by him from the first: Björnson, from whom he had

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been practically estranged ever since *The League of Youth*, and Georg Brandes. The latter published an article in which he declared (I quote from memory) that the play might or might not be Ibsen's greatest work, but that it was certainly his noblest deed. It was, doubtless, in acknowledgment of this article that Ibsen wrote to Brandes on January 3, 1882: "Yesterday I had the great pleasure of receiving your brilliantly clear and so warmly appreciative review of *Ghosts*. . . . All who read your article must, it seems to me, have their eyes opened to what I meant by my new book—assuming, that is, that they have any *wish* to see. For I cannot get rid of the impression that a very large number of the false interpretations which have appeared in the newspapers are the work of people who know better. In Norway, however, I am willing to believe that the stultification has in most cases been unintentional; and the reason is not far to seek. In that country a great many of the critics are theologians, more or less disguised; and these gentlemen are, as a rule, quite unable to write rationally about creative literature. That enfeeblement of judgment which, at least in the case of the average man, is an inevitable consequence of prolonged occupation with theological studies, betrays itself more especially in the judging of human character, human actions, and human motives. Practical business judgment, on the other hand, does not suffer so much from studies of this order. Therefore the reverend gentlemen are very often excellent members of local boards; but they are unquestionably our worst critics."

This passage is interesting as showing clearly the point of view from which Ibsen conceived the character of Manders. In the next paragraph of the same letter he discusses the attitude of "the so-called Liberal press"; but as the paragraph contains the germ of *An Enemy of the People*, it may most fittingly be quoted in the introduction to that play.

Three days later (January 6) Ibsen wrote to Schandorph, the Danish novelist: "I was quite prepared for the hubbub. If certain of our Scandinavian reviewers have no talent for anything else, they have an unquestionable talent for thoroughly misunderstanding and misinterpreting those authors whose books they undertake to judge. . . . They endeavour to make me responsible for the opinions which certain of the personages of my drama express. And yet there is not in the whole book a single opinion, a single utterance, which can be laid to the account of the author. I took good care to avoid this. The very method, the order of technique which imposes its form upon the play, forbids the author to appear in the speeches of his characters. My object was to make the reader feel that he was going through a piece of real experience; and nothing could more effectually prevent such an impression than the intrusion of the author's private opinions into the dialogue. Do they imagine at home that I am so inexpert in the theory of drama as not to know this? Of course I know it, and act accordingly. In no other play that I have written is the author so external to the action, so entirely absent from it, as in this last one."

"They say," he continued, "that the book preaches Nihilism. Not at all. It is not concerned to preach anything whatsoever. It merely points to the ferment of Nihilism going on under the surface, at home as elsewhere. A Pastor Manders will always goad one or other Mrs. Alving to revolt. And just because she is a woman, she will, when once she has begun, go to the utmost extremes."

Towards the end of January Ibsen wrote from Rome to Olaf Skavlan: "These last weeks have brought me a wealth of experiences, lessons, and discoveries. I, of course, foresaw that my new play would call forth a howl from the camp of the stagnationists; and for this I care no more than for the barking of a pack of chained dogs. But the pusillanimity which I have observed among the so-called Liberals has given me cause for reflection. The very day after my play was published the *Dagblad* rushed out a hurriedly-written article, evidently designed to purge itself of all suspicion of complicity in my work. This was entirely unnecessary. I myself am responsible for what I write, I and no one else. I cannot possibly embarrass any party, for to no party do I belong. I stand like a solitary franc-tireur at the outposts, and fight for my own hand. The only man in Norway who has stood up freely, frankly, and courageously for me is Björnson. It is just like him. He has in truth a great, kingly soul, and I shall never forget his action in this matter."

One more quotation completes the history of these stirring January days, as written by Ibsen himself. It occurs in a letter to a Danish jour-

nalist, Otto Borchsenius. "It may well be," the poet writes, "that the play is in several respects rather daring. But it seemed to me that the time had come for moving some boundary-posts. And this was an undertaking for which a man of the older generation, like myself, was better fitted than the many younger authors who might desire to do something of the kind. I was prepared for a storm; but such storms one must not shrink from encountering. That would be cowardice."

It happened that, just in these days, the present writer had frequent opportunities of conversing with Ibsen, and of hearing from his own lips almost all the views expressed in the above extracts. He was especially emphatic, I remember, in protesting against the notion that the opinions expressed by Mrs. Alving or Oswald were to be attributed to himself. He insisted, on the contrary, that Mrs. Alving's views were merely typical of the moral chaos inevitably produced by re-action from the narrow conventionalism represented by Manders.

With one consent, the leading theatres of the three Scandinavian capitals declined to have anything to do with the play. It was more than eighteen months old before it found its way to the stage at all. In August 1883 it was acted for the first time at Helsingborg, Sweden, by a travelling company under the direction of an eminent Swedish actor, August Lindberg, who himself played Oswald. He took it on tour round the principal cities of Scandinavia, playing it, among the rest, at a minor theatre in Christiania. It happened that the boards of the

Christiania Theatre were at the same time occupied by a French farce; and public demonstrations of protest were made against the managerial policy which gave *Tête de Linotte* the preference over *Gengangere.* Gradually the prejudice against the play broke down. Already in the autumn of 1883 it was produced at the Royal (Dramatiska) Theatre in Stockholm. When the new National Theatre was opened in Christiania in 1899, *Gengangere* found an early place in its repertory; and even the Royal Theatre in Copenhagen has since opened its doors to the tragedy.

Not until April 1886 was *Gespenster* acted in Germany, and then only at a private performance, at the Stadttheater, Augsburg, the poet himself being present. In the following winter it was acted at the famous Court Theatre at Meiningen, again in the presence of the poet. The first (private) performance in Berlin took place on January 9, 1887, at the Residenz Theater; and when the Freie Bühne, founded on the model of the Paris Théâtre Libre, began its operations two years later (September 29, 1889), *Gespenster* was the first play that it produced. The Freie Bühne gave the initial impulse to the whole modern movement which has given Germany a new dramatic literature; and the leaders of the movement, whether authors or critics, were one and all ardent disciples of Ibsen, who regarded *Gespenster* as his typical masterpiece. In Germany, then, the play certainly did, in Ibsen's own words, "move some boundary-posts." The Prussian censorship presently withdrew its veto, and on November

27, 1894, the two leading literary theatres of Berlin, the Deutsches Theater and the Lessing Theater, gave simultaneous performances of the tragedy. Everywhere in Germany and Austria it is now freely performed; but it is naturally one of the least popular of Ibsen's plays.

It was with *Les Revenants* that Ibsen made his first appearance on the French stage. The play was produced by the Théâtre Libre (at the Théâtre des Menus-Plaisirs) on May 29, 1890. Here, again, it became the watchword of the new school of authors and critics, and aroused a good deal of opposition among the old school. But the most hostile French criticisms were moderation itself compared with the torrents of abuse which were poured upon *Ghosts* by the journalists of London when, on March 13, 1891, the Independent Theatre, under the direction of Mr. J. T. Grein, gave a private performance of the play at the Royalty Theatre, Soho. I have elsewhere* placed upon record some of the amazing feats of vituperation achieved of the critics, and will not here recall them. It is sufficient to say that if the play had been a tenth part as nauseous as the epithets hurled at it and its author, the Censor's veto would have been amply justified. That veto is still (1906) in force. England enjoys the proud distinction of being the one country in the world where *Ghosts* may not be publicly acted.

In the United States, the first performance

* See "The Mausoleum of Ibsen," *Fortnightly Review*, August 1893. See also Mr. Bernard Shaw's *Quintessence of Ibsenism*, p. 89, and my introduction to *Ghosts* in the single-volume edition.

of the play in English took place at the Berkeley Lyceum, New York City, on January 5, 1894. The production was described by Mr. W. D. Howells as "a great theatrical event—the very greatest I have ever known." Other leading men of letters were equally impressed by it. Five years later, a second production took place at the Carnegie Lyceum; and an adventurous manager has even taken the play on tour in the United States. The Italian version of the tragedy, *Gli Spettri*, has ever since 1892 taken a prominent place in the repertory of the great actors Zaccone and Novelli, who have acted it, not only throughout Italy, but in Austria, Germany, Russia, Spain, and South America.

In an interview, published immediately after Ibsen's death, Björnstjerne Björnson, questioned as to what he held to be his brother-poet's greatest work, replied, without a moment's hesitation, *Gengangere*. This dictum can scarcely, I think, be accepted without some qualification. Even confining our attention to the modern plays, and leaving out of comparison *The Pretenders*, *Brand*, and *Peer Gynt*, we can scarcely call *Ghosts* Ibsen's richest or most human play, and certainly not his profoundest or most poetical. If some omnipotent Censorship decreed the annihilation of all his works save one, few people, I imagine, would vote that that one should be *Ghosts*. Even if half a dozen works were to be saved from the wreck, I doubt whether I, for my part, would include *Ghosts* in the list. It is, in my judgment, a little bare, hard, austere. It is the first work in which

Ibsen applies his new technical method — evolved, as I have suggested, during the composition of *A Doll's House*—and he applies it with something of fanaticism. He is under the sway of a prosaic ideal — confessed in the phrase, "My object was to make the reader feel that he was going through a piece of real experience"—and he is putting some constraint upon the poet within him. The action moves a little stiffly, and all in one rhythm. It lacks variety and suppleness. Moreover, the play affords some slight excuse for the criticism which persists in regarding Ibsen as a preacher rather than as a creator—an author who cares more for ideas and doctrines than for human beings. Though Mrs. Alving, Engstrand and Regina are rounded and breathing characters, it cannot be denied that Manders strikes one as a clerical type rather than an individual, while even Oswald might not quite unfairly be described as simply and solely his father's son, an object-lesson in heredity. We cannot be said to know him, individually and intimately, as we know Helmer or Stockmann, Hialmar Ekdal or Gregers Werle. Then, again, there are one or two curious flaws in the play. The question whether Oswald's "case" is one which actually presents itself in the medical books seems to me of very trifling moment. It is typically true, even if it be not true in detail. The suddenness of the catastrophe may possibly be exaggerated, its premonitions and even its essential nature may be misdescribed. On the other hand, I conceive it probable that the poet had documents to found upon, which may be unknown to his

critics. I have never taken any pains to satisfy myself upon the point, which seems to me quite immaterial. There is not the slightest doubt that the life-history of a Captain Alving may, and often does, entail upon posterity consequences quite as tragic as those which ensue in Oswald's case, and far more wide-spreading. That being so, the artistic justification of the poet's presentment of the case is certainly not dependent on its absolute scientific accuracy. The flaws above alluded to are of another nature. One of them is the prominence given to the fact that the Asylum is uninsured. No doubt there is some symbolical purport in the circumstance; but I cannot think that it is either sufficiently clear or sufficiently important to justify the emphasis thrown upon it at the end of the second act. Another dubious point is Oswald's argument in the first act as to the expensiveness of marriage as compared with free union. Since the parties to free union, as he describes it, accept all the responsibilities of marriage, and only pretermit the ceremony, the difference of expense, one would suppose, must be neither more nor less than the actual marriage fee. I have never seen this remark of Oswald's adequately explained, either as a matter of economic fact, or as a trait of character. Another blemish, of somewhat greater moment, is the inconceivable facility with which, in the third act, Manders suffers himself to be victimised by Engstrand. All these little things, taken together, detract, as it seems to me, from the artistic completeness of the play, and impair its claim to rank as the poet's masterpiece.

Even in prose drama, his greatest and most consummate achievements were yet to come.

Must we, then, wholly dissent from Björnson's judgment? I think not. In a historical, if not in an æsthetic, sense, *Ghosts* may well rank as Ibsen's greatest work. It was the play which first gave the full measure of his technical and spiritual originality and daring. It has done far more than any other of his plays to "move boundary-posts." It has advanced the frontiers of dramatic art and implanted new ideals, both technical and intellectual, in the minds of a whole generation of playwrights. It ranks with *Hernani* and *La Dame aux Camélias* among the epoch-making plays of the nineteenth century, while in point of essential originality it towers above them. We cannot, I think, get nearer to the truth than Georg Brandes did in the above-quoted phrase from his first notice of the play, describing it as not, perhaps, the poet's greatest work, but certainly his noblest deed. In another essay, Brandes has pointed to it, with equal justice, as marking Ibsen's final breach with his early—one might almost say his hereditary—romanticism. He here becomes, at last, "the most modern of the moderns." "This, I am convinced," says the Danish critic, "is his imperishable glory, and will give lasting life to his works."

A DOLL'S HOUSE

CHARACTERS.

TORVALD HELMER.
NORA, *his wife.*
DOCTOR RANK.
MRS. LINDEN.[1]
NILS KROGSTAD.
THE HELMERS' THREE CHILDREN.
ANNA,[2] *their nurse.*
A MAID-SERVANT (ELLEN).
A PORTER.

The action passes in Helmer's house (a flat) in Christiania.

[1] In the original "Fru Linde."
[2] In the original "Anne-Marie."

A DOLL'S HOUSE.

ACT FIRST.

A room, comfortably and tastefully, but not expensively, furnished. In the back, on the right, a door leads to the hall; on the left another door leads to HELMER'S *study. Between the two doors a pianoforte. In the middle of the left wall a door, and nearer the front a window. Near the window a round table with arm-chairs and a small sofa. In the right wall, somewhat to the back, a door, and against the same wall, further forward, a procelain stove; in front of it a couple of arm-chairs and a rocking-chair. Between the stove and the side-door a small table. Engravings on the walls. A what-not with china and bric-à-brac. A small bookcase filled with handsomely bound books. Carpet. A fire in the stove. It is a winter day.*

A bell rings in the hall outside. Presently the outer door of the flat is heard to open. Then NORA *enters, humming gaily. She is in outdoor dress, and carries several parcels, which she lays on the right-hand table. She leaves the door into the hall open, and a* PORTER *is seen outside, carrying a Christmas-tree and a basket, which he gives to the* MAID-SERVANT *who has opened the door.*

NORA.

Hide the Christmas-tree carefully, Ellen; the children must on no account see it before this evening, when it's lighted up. [*To the* PORTER, *taking out her purse.*] How much?

PORTER.

Fifty öre.[1]

NORA.

There is a crown. No, keep the change.

[*The* PORTER *thanks her and goes.* NORA *shuts the door. She continues smiling in quiet glee as she takes off her outdoor things. Taking from her pocket a bag of macaroons, she eats one or two. Then she goes on tip-toe to her husband's door and listens.*

NORA.

Yes; he is at home.

[*She begins humming again, crossing to the table on the right.*

HELMER.

[*In his room.*] Is that my lark twittering there?

NORA.

[*Busy opening some of her parcels.*] Yes, it is.

HELMER.

Is it the squirrel frisking around?

NORA.

Yes!

HELMER.

When did the squirrel get home?

[1] About sixpence. There are 100 öre in a krone or crown, which is worth thirteenpence halfpenny.

NORA.

Just this minute. [*Hides the bag of macaroons in her pocket and wipes her mouth.*] Come here, Torvald, and see what I've been buying.

HELMER.

Don't interrupt me. [*A little later he opens the door and looks in, pen in hand.*] Buying, did you say? What! All that? Has my little spendthrift been making the money fly again?

NORA.

Why, Torvald, surely we can afford to launch out a little now. It's the first Christmas we haven't had to pinch.

HELMER.

Come come; we can't afford to squander money.

NORA.

Oh yes, Torvald, do let us squander a little, now—just the least little bit! You know you'll soon be earning heaps of money.

HELMER.

Yes, from New Year's Day. But there's a whole quarter before my first salary is due.

NORA.

Never mind; we can borrow in the meantime.

HELMER.

Nora! [*He goes up to her and takes her playfully by the ear.*] Still my little featherbrain! Supposing I borrowed a thousand crowns to-day, and you made ducks and drakes of them during Christmas week, and then on New Year's Eve a

tile blew off the roof and knocked my brains out——

NORA.

[*Laying her hand on his mouth.*] Hush! How can you talk so horridly?

HELMER.

But supposing it were to happen—what then?

NORA.

If anything so dreadful happened, it would be all the same to me whether I was in debt or not.

HELMER.

But what about the creditors?

NORA.

They! Who cares for them? They're only strangers.

HELMER.

Nora, Nora! What a woman you are! But seriously, Nora, you know my principles on these points. No debts! No borrowing! Home life ceases to be free and beautiful as soon as it is founded on borrowing and debt. We two have held out bravely till now, and we are not going to give in at the last.

NORA.

[*Going to the fireplace.*] Very well—as you please, Torvald.

HELMER.

[*Following her.*] Come come; my little lark mustn't droop her wings like that. What? Is my squirrel in the sulks? [*Takes out his purse.*] Nora, what do you think I have here?

NORA.

[*Turning round quickly.*] Money!

HELMER.

There! [*Gives her some notes.*] Of course I know all sorts of things are wanted at Christmas.

NORA.

[*Counting.*] Ten, twenty, thirty, forty. Oh, thank you, thank you, Torvald! This will go a long way.

HELMER.

I should hope so.

NORA.

Yes, indeed; a long way! But come here, and let me show you all I've been buying. And so cheap! Look, here's a new suit for Ivar, and a little sword. Here are a horse and a trumpet for Bob. And here are a doll and a cradle for Emmy. They're only common; but they're good enough for her to pull to pieces. And dress-stuffs and kerchiefs for the servants. I ought to have got something better for old Anna.

HELMER.

And what's in that other parcel?

NORA.

[*Crying out.*] No, Torvald, you're not to see that until this evening!

HELMER.

Oh! Ah! But now tell me, you little spend-thrift, have you thought of anything for yourself?

NORA.

For myself! Oh, I don't want anything.

HELMER.

Nonsense! Just tell me something sensible you would like to have.

NORA.

No, really I don't know of anything—— Well, listen, Torvald——

HELMER.

Well?

NORA

[*Playing with his coat-buttons, without looking him in the face.*] If you really want to give me something, you might, you know—you might——

HELMER.

Well? Out with it!

NORA.

[*Quickly.*] You might give me money, Torvald. Only just what you think you can spare; then I can buy something with it later on.

HELMER.

But, Nora——

NORA.

Oh, please do, dear Torvald, please do! I should hang the money in lovely gilt paper on the Christmas-tree. Wouldn't that be fun?

HELMER.

What do they call the birds that are always making the money fly?

NORA.

Yes, I know—spendthrifts,[1] of course. But please do as I ask you, Torvald. Then I shall have time to think what I want most. Isn't that very sensible, now?

HELMER.

[*Smiling.*] Certainly; that is to say, if you really kept the money I gave you, and really spent it on something for yourself. But it all goes in housekeeping, and for all manner of useless things, and then I have to pay up again.

NORA.

But, Torvald——

HELMER.

Can you deny it, Nora dear? [*He puts his arm round her.*] It's a sweet little lark, but it gets through a lot of money. No one would believe how much it costs a man to keep such a little bird as you.

NORA.

For shame! How can you say so? Why, I save as much as ever I can.

HELMER.

[*Laughing.*] Very true—as much as you can—but that's precisely nothing.

NORA.

[*Hums and smiles with covert glee.*] H'm! If you only knew, Torvald, what expenses we larks and squirrels have.

HELMER.

You're a strange little being! Just like your father—always on the look-out for all the money

[1] "Spillefugl," literally "playbird," means a gambler.

you can lay your hands on; but the moment you have it, it seems to slip through your fingers; you never know what becomes of it. Well, one must take you as you are. It's in the blood. Yes, Nora, that sort of thing is hereditary.

NORA.

I wish I had inherited many of papa's qualities.

HELMER.

And I don't wish you anything but just what you are—my own, sweet little song-bird. But I say—it strikes me you look so—so—what shall I call it?—so suspicious to-day——

NORA.

Do I?

HELMER.

You do, indeed. Look me full in the face.

NORA.

[*Looking at him.*] Well?

HELMER.

[*Threatening with his finger.*] Hasn't the little sweet-tooth been playing pranks to-day?

NORA.

No; how can you think such a thing!

HELMER.

Didn't she just look in at the confectioner's?

NORA.

No, Torvald; really——

HELMER.

Not to sip a little jelly?

NORA.

No; certainly not.

HELMER.

Hasn't she even nibbled a macaroon or two?

NORA.

No, Torvald, indeed, indeed!

HELMER.

Well, well, well; of course I'm only joking.

NORA.

[*Goes to the table on the right.*] I shouldn't think of doing what you disapprove of.

HELMER.

No, I'm sure of that; and, besides, you've given me your word—— [*Going towards her.*] Well, keep your little Christmas secrets to yourself, Nora darling. The Christmas-tree will bring them all to light, I daresay.

NORA.

Have you remembered to invite Doctor Rank?

HELMER.

No. But it's not necessary; he'll come as a matter of course. Besides, I shall ask him when he looks in to-day. I've ordered some capital wine. Nora, you can't think how I look forward to this evening.

NORA.

And I too. How the children will enjoy themselves, Torvald!

HELMER.

Ah, it's glorious to feel that one has an assured

position and ample means. Isn't it delightful to think of?

NORA.

Oh, it's wonderful!

HELMER.

Do you remember last Christmas? For three whole weeks beforehand you shut yourself up every evening till long past midnight to make flowers for the Christmas-tree, and all sorts of other marvels that were to have astonished us. I was never so bored in my life.

NORA.

I didn't bore myself at all.

HELMER.

[*Smiling.*] But it came to little enough in the end, Nora.

NORA.

Oh, are you going to tease me about that again? How could I help the cat getting in and pulling it all to pieces?

HELMER.

To be sure you couldn't, my poor little Nora. You did your best to give us all pleasure, and that's the main point. But, all the same, it's a good thing the hard times are over.

NORA.

Oh, isn't it wonderful?

HELMER.

Now I needn't sit here boring myself all alone; and you needn't tire your blessed eyes and your delicate little fingers——

NORA.

[*Clapping her hands.*] No, I needn't, need I, Torvald? Oh, how wonderful it is to think of? [*Takes his arm.*] And now I'll tell you how I think we ought to manage, Torvald. As soon as Christmas is over—— [*The hall-door bell rings.*] Oh, there's a ring! [*Arranging the room.*] That's somebody come to call. How tiresome!

HELMER.

I'm "not at home" to callers; remember that.

ELLEN.

[*In the doorway.*] A lady to see you, ma'am.

NORA.

Show her in.

ELLEN.

[*To* HELMER.] And the doctor has just come, sir.

HELMER.

Has he gone into my study?

ELLEN.

Yes, sir.

[HELMER *goes into his study.* ELLEN *ushers in* MRS. LINDEN, *in travelling costume, and goes out, closing the door.*

MRS. LINDEN.

[*Embarrassed and hesitating.*] How do you do, Nora?

NORA.

[*Doubtfully.*] How do you do?

MRS. LINDEN.

I see you don't recognise me

NORA.

No, I don't think—oh yes!—I believe—— [*Suddenly brightening.*] What, Christina! Is it really you?

MRS. LINDEN.

Yes; really I!

NORA.

Christina! And to think I didn't know you! But how could I—— [*More softly.*] How changed you are, Christina!

MRS. LINDEN.

Yes, no doubt. In nine or ten years——

NORA.

Is it really so long since we met? Yes, so it is. Oh, the last eight years have been a happy time, I can tell you. And now you have come to town? All that long journey in mid-winter! How brave of you!

MRS. LINDEN.

I arrived by this morning's steamer.

NORA.

To have a merry Christmas, of course. Oh, how delightful! Yes, we will have a merry Christmas. Do take your things off. Aren't you frozen? [*Helping her.*] There; now we'll sit cosily by the fire. No, you take the arm-chair; I shall sit in this rocking-chair. [*Seizes her hands.*] Yes, now I can see the dear old face again. It was only at the first glance—— But you're a little paler, Christina—and perhaps a little thinner.

MRS. LINDEN.

And much, much older, Nora.

NORA.

Yes, perhaps a little older—not much—ever so little. [*She suddenly checks herself; seriously.*] Oh, what a thoughtless wretch I am! Here I sit chattering on, and—— Dear, dear Christina, can you forgive me!

MRS. LINDEN.

What do you mean, Nora?

NORA.

[*Softly.*] Poor Christina! I forgot: you are a widow.

MRS. LINDEN.

Yes; my husband died three years ago.

NORA.

I know, I know; I saw it in the papers. Oh, believe me, Christina, I did mean to write to you; but I kept putting it off, and something always came in the way.

MRS. LINDEN.

I can quite understand that, Nora dear.

NORA.

No, Christina; it was horrid of me. Oh, you poor darling! how much you must have gone through!—And he left you nothing?

MRS. LINDEN.

Nothing.

NORA.

And no children?

MRS. LINDEN.

None.

NORA.

Nothing, nothing at all?

MRS. LINDEN.

Not even a sorrow or a longing to dwell upon.

NORA.

[*Looking at her incredulously.*] My dear Christina, how is that possible?

MRS. LINDEN.

[*Smiling sadly and stroking her hair.*] Oh, it happens so sometimes, Nora.

NORA.

So utterly alone! How dreadful that must be! I have three of the loveliest children. I can't show them to you just now; they're out with their nurse. But now you must tell me everything.

MRS. LINDEN.

No, no; I want you to tell me——

NORA.

No, you must begin; I won't be egotistical to-day. To-day I'll think only of you. Oh! but I must tell you one thing—perhaps you've heard of our great stroke of fortune?

MRS. LINDEN.

No. What is it?

NORA.

Only think! my husband has been made manager of the Joint Stock Bank.

MRS. LINDEN.

Your husband! Oh, how fortunate!

NORA.

Yes; isn't it? A lawyer's position is so uncertain, you see, especially when he won't touch any business that's the least bit—shady, as of course Torvald never would; and there I quite agree with him. Oh! you can imagine how glad we are. He is to enter on his new position at the New Year, and then he'll have a large salary, and percentages. In future we shall be able to live quite differently—just as we please, in fact. Oh, Christina, I feel so lighthearted and happy! It's delightful to have lots of money, and no need to worry about things, isn't it?

MRS. LINDEN.

Yes; at any rate it must be delightful to have what you need.

NORA.

No, not only what you need, but heaps of money—heaps!

MRS. LINDEN.

[*Smiling.*] Nora, Nora, haven't you learnt reason yet? In our schooldays you were a shocking little spendthrift.

NORA.

[*Quietly smiling.*] Yes; that's what Torvald says I am still. [*Holding up her forefinger.*] But "Nora, Nora" is not so silly as you all think. Oh! I haven't had the chance to be much of a spendthrift. We have both had to work.

MRS. LINDEN.

You too?

NORA.

Yes, light fancy work: crochet, and embroidery, and things of that sort; [*Carelessly*] and other work too. You know, of course, that Torvald left the Government service when we were married. He had little chance of promotion, and of course he required to make more money. But in the first year after our marriage he overworked himself terribly. He had to undertake all sorts of extra work, you know, and to slave early and late. He couldn't stand it, and fell dangerously ill. Then the doctors declared he must go to the South.

MRS. LINDEN.

You spent a whole year in Italy, didn't you?

NORA.

Yes, we did. It wasn't easy to manage, I can tell you. It was just after Ivar's birth. But of course we had to go. Oh, it was a wonderful, delicious journey! And it saved Torvald's life. But it cost a frightful lot of money, Christina.

MRS. LINDEN.

So I should think.

NORA.

Twelve hundred dollars! Four thousand eight hundred crowns![1] Isn't that a lot of money?

MRS. LINDEN.

How lucky you had the money to spend

[1] The dollar (4*s.* 6*d.*) was the old unit of currency in Norway. The crown was substituted for it shortly before the date of this play.

NORA.

We got it from father, you must know.

MRS. LINDEN.

Ah, I see. He died just about that time, didn't he?

NORA.

Yes, Christina, just then. And only think! I couldn't go and nurse him! I was expecting little Ivar's birth daily; and then I had my poor sick Torvald to attend to. Dear, kind old father! I never saw him again, Christina. Oh! that's the hardest thing I have had to bear since my marriage.

MRS. LINDEN.

I know how fond you were of him. But then you went to Italy?

NORA.

Yes; you see, we had the money, and the doctors said we must lose no time. We started a month later.

MRS. LINDEN.

And your husband came back completely cured.

NORA.

Sound as a bell.

MRS. LINDEN.

But—the doctor?

NORA.

What do you mean?

MRS. LINDEN.

I thought as I came in your servant announced the doctor——

NORA.

Oh, yes; Doctor Rank. But he doesn't come professionally. He is our best friend, and never lets a day pass without looking in. No, Torvald hasn't had an hour's illness since that time. And the children are so healthy and well, and so am I. [*Jumps up and claps her hands.*] Oh, Christina, Christina, what a wonderful thing it is to live and to be happy!—Oh, but it's really too horrid of me! Here am I talking about nothing but my own concerns. [*Seats herself upon a footstool close to* CHRISTINA, *and lays her arms on her friend's lap.*] Oh, don't be angry with me! Now tell me, is it really true that you didn't love your husband? What made you marry him, then?

MRS. LINDEN.

My mother was still alive, you see, bedridden and helpless; and then I had my two younger brothers to think of. I didn't think it would be right for me to refuse him.

NORA.

Perhaps it wouldn't have been. I suppose he was rich then?

MRS. LINDEN.

Very well off, I believe. But his business was uncertain. It fell to pieces at his death, and there was nothing left.

NORA.

And then——?

MRS. LINDEN.

Then I had to fight my way by keeping a shop, a little school, anything I could turn my hand to. The last three years have been one long struggle

for me. But now it is over, Nora. My poor mother no longer needs me; she is at rest. And the boys are in business, and can look after themselves.

NORA.

How free your life must feel!

MRS. LINDEN.

No, Nora; only inexpressibly empty. No one to live for! [*Stands up restlessly.*] That's why I could not bear to stay any longer in that out-of-the way corner. Here it must be easier to find something to take one up—to occupy one's thoughts. If I could only get some settled employment—some office work.

NORA.

But, Christina, that's such drudgery, and you look worn out already. It would be ever so much better for you to go to some watering-place and rest.

MRS. LINDEN.

[*Going to the window.*] I have no father to give me the money, Nora.

NORA.

[*Rising.*] Oh, don't be vexed with me.

MRS. LINDEN.

[*Going to her.*] My dear Nora, don't you be vexed with me. The worst of a position like mine is that it makes one so bitter. You have no one to work for, yet you have to be always on the strain. You must live; and so you become selfish. When I heard of the happy change in your fortunes—can you believe it?—I was glad for my own sake more than for yours.

NORA.

How do you mean? Ah, I see! You think Torvald can perhaps do something for you.

MRS. LINDEN.

Yes; I thought so.

NORA.

And so he shall, Christina. Just you leave it all to me. I shall lead up to it beautifully!—I shall think of some delightful plan to put him in a good humour! Oh, I should so love to help you.

MRS. LINDEN.

How good of you, Nora, to stand by me so warmly! Doubly good in you, who know so little of the troubles and burdens of life.

NORA.

I? I know so little of——?

MRS. LINDEN.

[*Smiling.*] Oh, well—a little fancy-work, and so forth.—You're a child, Nora.

NORA.

[*Tosses her head and paces the room.*] Oh, come, you mustn't be so patronising!

MRS. LINDEN.

No?

NORA.

You're like the rest. You all think I'm fit for nothing really serious——

MRS. LINDEN.

Well, well——

NORA.

You think I've had no troubles in this weary world.

MRS. LINDEN.

My dear Nora, you've just told me all your troubles.

NORA.

Pooh—those trifles! [*Softly.*] I haven't told you the great thing.

MRS. LINDEN.

The great thing? What do you mean?

NORA.

I know you look down upon me, Christina; but you have no right to. You are proud of having worked so hard and so long for your mother.

MRS. LINDEN.

I am sure I don't look down upon any one; but it's true I am both proud and glad when I remember that I was able to keep my mother's last days free from care.

NORA.

And you're proud to think of what you have done for your brothers, too.

MRS. LINDEN.

Have I not the right to be?

NORA.

Yes indeed. But now let me tell you, Christina—I, too, have something to be proud and glad of.

MRS. LINDEN.

I don't doubt it. But what do you mean?

NORA.

Hush! Not so loud. Only think, if Torvald were to hear! He mustn't—not for worlds! No one must know about it, Christina—no one but you.

MRS LINDEN.

Why, what can it be?

NORA.

Come over here. [*Draws her down beside her on the sofa.*] Yes, Christina—I, too, have something to be proud and glad of. I saved Torvald's life.

MRS. LINDEN.

Saved his life? How?

NORA.

I told you about our going to Italy. Torvald would have died but for that.

MRS. LINDEN.

Well—and your father gave you the money.

NORA.

[*Smiling.*] Yes, so Torvald and every one believes; but——

MRS. LINDEN.

But——?

NORA.

Papa didn't give us one penny. It was *I* that found the money.

MRS. LINDEN.

You? All that money?

NORA.

Twelve hundred dollars. Four thousand eight hundred crowns. What do you say to that?

MRS. LINDEN.

My dear Nora, how did you manage it? Did you win it in the lottery?

NORA.

[*Contemptuously*] In the lottery? Pooh! Any one could have done that!

MRS. LINDEN.

Then wherever did you get it from?

NORA.

[*Hums and smiles mysteriously.*] H'm; tra-la-la-la

MRS. LINDEN.

Of course you couldn't borrow it.

NORA.

No? Why not?

MRS. LINDEN.

Why, a wife can't borrow without her husband's consent.

NORA.

[*Tossing her head.*] Oh! when the wife has some idea of business, and knows how to set about things——

MRS. LINDEN.

But, Nora, I don't understand——

NORA.

Well, you needn't. I never said I borrowed the money. There are many ways I may have got it.

[*Throws herself back on the sofa.*] I may have got it from some admirer. When one is so—attractive as I am——

MRS. LINDEN.

You're too silly, Nora.

NORA.

Now I'm sure you're dying of curiosity, Christina——

MRS. LINDEN.

Listen to me, Nora dear: haven't you been a little rash?

NORA.

[*Sitting upright again.*] Is it rash to save one's husband's life?

MRS. LINDEN.

I think it was rash of you, without his knowledge——

NORA.

But it would have been fatal for him to know! Can't you understand that? He wasn't even to suspect how ill he was. The doctors came to me privately and told me his life was in danger—that nothing could save him but a winter in the South. Do you think I didn't try diplomacy first? I told him how I longed to have a trip abroad, like other young wives; I wept and prayed; I said he ought to think of my condition, and not to thwart me; and then I hinted that he could borrow the money. But then, Christina, he got almost angry. He said I was frivolous, and that it was his duty as a husband not to yield to my whims and fancies —so he called them. Very well, thought I, but saved you must be; and then I found the way to do it.

MRS. LINDEN.

And did your husband never learn from your father that the money was not from him?

NORA.

No; never. Papa died at that very time. I meant to have told him all about it, and begged him to say nothing. But he was so ill—unhappily, it wasn't necessary.

MRS. LINDEN.

And you have never confessed to your husband?

NORA.

Good heavens! What can you be thinking of? Tell him, when he has such a loathing of debt! And besides—how painful and humiliating it would be for Torvald, with his manly self-respect, to know that he owed anything to me! It would utterly upset the relation between us; our beautiful, happy home would never again be what it is.

MRS. LINDEN.

Will you never tell him?

NORA.

[*Thoughtfully, half-smiling.*] Yes, some time perhaps—many, many years hence, when I'm not so pretty. You mustn't laugh at me! Of course I mean when Torvald is not so much in love with me as he is now; when it doesn't amuse him any longer to see me dancing about, and dressing up and acting. Then it might be well to have something in reserve. [*Breaking off.*] Nonsense! nonsense! That time will never come. Now, what do you say to my grand secret, Christina? Am I fit for nothing now? You

may believe it has cost me a lot of anxiety. It has been no joke to meet my engagements punctually. You must know, Christina, that in business there are things called instalments, and quarterly interest, that are terribly hard to provide for. So I've had to pinch a little here and there, wherever I could. I couldn't save much out of the housekeeping, for of course Torvald had to live well. And I couldn't let the children go about badly dressed ; all I got for them, I spent on them, the blessed darlings !

MRS. LINDEN.

Poor Nora ! So it had to come out of your own pocket-money.

NORA.

Yes, of couse. After all, the whole thing was my doing. When Torvald gave me money for clothes, and so on, I never spent more than half of it ; I always bought the simplest and cheapest things. It's a mercy that everything suits me so well—Torvald never had any suspicions. But it was often very hard, Christina dear. For it's nice to be beautifully dressed—now, isn't it ?

MRS. LINDEN.

Indeed it is.

NORA.

Well, and besides that, I made money in other ways. Last winter I was so lucky—I got a heap of copying to do. I shut myself up every evening and wrote far into the night. Oh, sometimes I was so tired, so tired. And yet it was splendid to work in that way and earn money. I almost felt as if I was a man.

MRS. LINDEN.

Then how much have you been able to pay off?

NORA.

Well, I can't precisely say. It's difficult to keep that sort of business clear. I only know that I've paid everything I could scrape together. Sometimes I really didn't know where to turn. [*Smiles.*] Then I used to sit here and pretend that a rich old gentleman was in love with me——

MRS. LINDEN.

What! What gentleman?

NORA.

Oh, nobody!—that he was dead now, and that when his will was opened, there stood in large letters: "Pay over at once everything of which I die possessed to that charming person, Mrs. Nora Helmer."

MRS. LINDEN.

But, my dear Nora—what gentleman do you mean?

NORA.

Oh dear, can't you understand? There wasn't any old gentleman: it was only what I used to dream and dream when I was at my wits' end for money. But it doesn't matter now—the tiresome old creature may stay where he is for me. I care nothing for him or his will; for now my troubles are over. [*Springing up.*] Oh, Christina, how glorious it is to think of! Free from all anxiety! Free, quite free. To be able to play and romp about with the children; to have things tasteful and pretty in the house, exactly as Torvald likes

it! And then the spring will soon be here, with the great blue sky. Perhaps then we shall have a little holiday. Perhaps I shall see the sea again. Oh, what a wonderful thing it is to live and to be happy! [*The hall-door bell rings.*

MRS. LINDEN.

[*Rising.*] There's a ring. Perhaps I had better go.

NORA.

No; do stay. No one will come here. It's sure to be some one for Torvald.

ELLEN.

[*In the doorway.*] If you please, ma'am, there's a gentleman to speak to Mr. Helmer.

NORA.

Who is the gentleman?

KROGSTAD.

[*In the doorway.*] It is I, Mrs. Helmer.

[MRS. LINDEN *starts and turns away to the window.*

NORA.

[*Goes a step towards him, anxiously, speaking low.*] You? What is it? What do you want with my husband?

KROGSTAD.

Bank business—in a way. I hold a small post in the Joint Stock Bank, and your husband is to be our new chief, I hear.

NORA.

Then it is——?

KROGSTAD.

Only tiresome business, Mrs. Helmer; nothing more.

NORA.

Then will you please go to his study.

[KROGSTAD *goes. She bows indifferently while she closes the door into the hall. Then she goes to the stove and looks to the fire.*

MRS. LINDEN.

Nora—who was that man?

NORA.

A Mr. Krogstad—a lawyer.

MRS. LINDEN.

Then it was really he?

NORA.

Do you know him?

MRS. LINDEN.

I used to know him many years ago. He was in a lawyer's office in our town.

NORA.

Yes, so he was.

MRS. LINDEN.

How he has changed!

NORA.

I believe his marriage was unhappy.

MRS. LINDEN.

And he is a widower now?

NORA.

With a lot of children. There! Now it will burn up.

[*She closes the stove, and pushes the rocking-chair a little aside.*

MRS. LINDEN.

His business is not of the most creditable, they say?

NORA.

Isn't it? I daresay not. I don't know. But don't let us think of business—it's so tiresome.

DR. RANK *comes out of* HELMER'S *room.*

RANK.

[*Still in the doorway.*] No, no; I'm in your way. I shall go and have a chat with your wife. [*Shuts the door and sees* MRS. LINDEN.] Oh, I beg your pardon. I'm in the way here too.

NORA.

No, not in the least. [*Introduces them.*] Doctor Rank—Mrs. Linden.

RANK.

Oh, indeed; I've often heard Mrs. Linden's name; I think I passed you on the stairs as I came up.

MRS. LINDEN.

Yes; I go so very slowly. Stairs try me so much.

RANK.

Ah—you are not very strong?

MRS. LINDEN.

Only overworked.

RANK.

Nothing more? Then no doubt you've come to town to find rest in a round of dissipation?

MRS. LINDEN.

I have come to look for employment.

RANK.

Is that an approved remedy for overwork?

MRS. LINDEN.

One must live, Doctor Rank.

RANK.

Yes, that seems to be the general opinion.

NORA.

Come, Doctor Rank—you want to live yourself.

RANK.

To be sure I do. However wretched I may be, I want to drag on as long as possible. All my patients, too, have the same mania. And it's the same with people whose complaint is moral. At this very moment Helmer is talking to just such a moral incurable——

MRS. LINDEN.

[*Softly.*] Ah!

NORA.

Whom do you mean?

RANK.

Oh, a fellow named Krogstad, a man you know nothing about—corrupt to the very core of his

character. But even he began by announcing, as a matter of vast importance, that he must live.

NORA.

Indeed? And what did he want with Torvald?

RANK.

I haven't an idea; I only gathered that it was some bank business.

NORA.

I didn't know that Krog—that this Mr. Krogstad had anything to do with the Bank?

RANK.

Yes. He has got some sort of place there. [*To* MRS. LINDEN.] I don't know whether, in your part of the country, you have people who go grubbing and sniffing around in search of moral rottenness—and then, when they have found a "case," don't rest till they have got their man into some good position, where they can keep a watch upon him. Men with a clean bill of health they leave out in the cold.

MRS. LINDEN.

Well, I suppose the—delicate characters require most care.

RANK.

[*Shrugs his shoulders.*] There we have it! It's that notion that makes society a hospital.

[NORA, *deep in her own thoughts, breaks into half-stifled laughter and claps her hands.*

RANK.

Why do you laugh at that? Have you any idea what "society" is?

NORA.

What do I care for your tiresome society? I was laughing at something else—something excessively amusing. Tell me, Doctor Rank, are all the employees at the Bank dependent on Torvald now?

RANK.

Is that what strikes you as excessively amusing?

NORA.

[*Smiles and hums.*] Never mind, never mind! [*Walks about the room.*] Yes, it is funny to think that we—that Torvald has such power over so many people. [*Takes the bag from her pocket.*] Doctor Rank, will you have a macaroon?

RANK.

What!—macaroons! I thought they were contraband here.

NORA.

Yes; but Christina brought me these.

MRS. LINDEN.

What! I——?

NORA.

Oh, well! Don't be frightened. You couldn't possibly know that Torvald had forbidden them. The fact is, he's afraid of me spoiling my teeth. But, oh 'bother, just for once!—That's for you, Doctor Rank! [*Puts a macaroon into his mouth.*] And you too, Christina. And I'll have one while we're about it—only a tiny one, or at most two. [*Walks about again.*] Oh dear, I am happy! There's only one thing in the world I really want.

RANK.

Well; what's that?

NORA.

There's something I should so like to say—in Torvald's hearing.

RANK.

Then why don't you say it?

NORA.

Because I daren't, it's so ugly.

MRS. LINDEN.

Ugly

RANK.

In that case you'd better not. But to us you might—— What is it you would so like to say in Helmer's hearing?

NORA.

I should so love to say "Damn it all!"*

RANK.

Are you out of your mind?

MRS. LINDEN.

Good gracious, Nora——!

RANK.

Say it—there he is!

NORA.

[*Hides the macaroons.*] Hush—sh—sh

HELMER *comes out of his room, hat in hand, with his overcoat on his arm.*

* "Död og pine," literally "death and torture"; but by usage a comparatively mild oath.

NORA.

[*Going to him.*] Well, Torvald dear, have you got rid of him?

HELMER.

Yes; he has just gone.

NORA.

Let me introduce you—this is Christina, who has come to town——

HELMER.

Christina? Pardon me, I don't know——

NORA.

Mrs. Linden, Torvald dear—Christina Linden.

HELMER.

[*To* MRS. LINDEN.] Indeed! A school-friend of my wife's, no doubt?

MRS. LINDEN.

Yes; we knew each other as girls.

NORA.

And only think! she has taken this long journey on purpose to speak to you.

HELMER.

To speak to me!

MRS. LINDEN.

Well, not quite——

NORA.

You see, Christina is tremendously clever at office-work, and she's so anxious to work under a

first-rate man of business in order to learn still more ——

HELMER.

[*To* MRS. LINDEN.] Very sensible indeed.

NORA.

And when she heard you were appointed manager—it was telegraphed, you know—she started off at once, and—— Torvald, dear, for my sake, you must do something for Christina. Now can't you?

HELMER.

It's not impossible. I presume Mrs. Linden is a widow?

MRS. LINDEN.

Yes.

HELMER.

And you have already had some experience of business?

MRS. LINDEN.

A good deal.

HELMER.

Well, then, it's very likely I may be able to find a place for you.

NORA.

[*Clapping her hands.*] There now! There now!

HELMER.

You have come at a fortunate moment, Mrs. Linden.

MRS. LINDEN.

Oh, how can I thank you —?

HELMER.

[*Smiling.*] There is no occasion. [*Puts on his overcoat.*] But for the present you must excuse me——

RANK.

Wait; I am going with you.

[*Fetches his fur coat from the hall and warms it at the fire.*

NORA.

Don't be long, Torvald dear.

HELMER.

Only an hour; not more.

NORA.

Are you going too, Christina?

MRS. LINDEN.

[*Putting on her walking things.*] Yes; I must set about looking for lodgings.

HELMER.

Then perhaps we can go together?

NORA.

[*Helping her.*] What a pity we haven't a spare room for you; but it's impossible——

MRS. LINDEN.

I shouldn't think of troubling you. Good-bye, dear Nora, and thank you for all your kindness.

NORA.

Good-bye for the present. Of course you'll come back this evening. And you, too, Doctor

Rank. What! If you're well enough? Of course you'll be well enough. Only wrap up warmly. [*They go out, talking, into the hall. Outside on the stairs are heard children's voices.*] There they are! There they are! [*She runs to the outer door and opens it. The nurse,* ANNA, *enters the hall with the children.*] Come in! Come in! [*Stoops down and kisses the children.*] Oh, my sweet darlings! Do you see them, Christina? Aren't they lovely?

RANK.

Don't let us stand here chattering in the draught.

HELMER.

Come, Mrs. Linden; only mothers can stand such a temperature.

[DR. RANK, HELMER, *and* MRS. LINDEN *go down the stairs;* ANNA *enters the room with the children;* NORA *also, shutting the door.*

NORA.

How fresh and bright you look! And what red cheeks you've got! Like apples and roses. [*The children chatter to her during what follows.*] Have you had great fun? That's splendid! Oh, really! You've been giving Emmy and Bob a ride on your sledge!—both at once, only think! Why, you're quite a man, Ivar. Oh, give her to me a little, Anna. My sweet little dolly! [*Takes the smallest from the nurse and dances with her.*] Yes, yes; mother will dance with Bob too. What! Did you have a game of snowballs? Oh, I wish I'd been there. No; leave them, Anna; I'll take their things off. Oh, yes, let

me do it; it's such fun. Go to the nursery; you look frozen. You'll find some hot coffee on the stove.

[*The* NURSE *goes into the room on the left.* NORA *takes off the children's things and throws them down anywhere, while the children talk all together.*

Really! A big dog ran after you? But he didn't bite you? No; dogs don't bite dear little dolly children. Don't peep into those parcels, Ivar. What is it? Wouldn't you like to know? Take care—it'll bite! What? Shall we have a game? What shall we play at? Hide-and-seek? Yes, let's play hide-and-seek. Bob shall hide first. Am I to? Yes, let me hide first.

[*She and the children play, with laughter and shouting, in the room and the adjacent one to the right. At last* NORA *hides under the table; the children come rushing in, look for her, but cannot find her, hear her half-choked laughter, rush to the table, lift up the cover and see her. Loud shouts. She creeps out, as though to frighten them. Fresh shouts. Meanwhile there has been a knock at the door leading into the hall. No one has heard it. Now the door is half opened and* KROGSTAD *appears. He waits a little; the game is renewed.*

KROGSTAD.

I beg your pardon, Mrs. Helmer——

NORA.

[*With a suppressed cry, turns round and half jumps up.*] Ah! What do you want?

KROGSTAD.

Excuse me; the outer door was ajar—somebody must have forgotten to shut it——

NORA.

[*Standing up.*] My husband is not at home, Mr. Krogstad.

KROGSTAD.

I know it.

NORA.

Then what do you want here?

KROGSTAD.

To say a few words to you.

NORA.

To me? [*To the children, softly.*] Go in to Anna. What? No, the strange man won't hurt mamma. When he's gone we'll go on playing. [*She leads the children into the left-hand room, and shuts the door behind them. Uneasy, in suspense.*] It is to me you wish to speak?

KROGSTAD.

Yes, to you.

NORA.

To-day? But it's not the first yet——

KROGSTAD.

No, to-day is Christmas Eve. It will depend upon yourself whether you have a merry Christmas.

NORA.

What do you want? I'm not ready to-day——

KROGSTAD.

Never mind that just now. I have come about another matter. You have a minute to spare?

NORA.

Oh, yes, I suppose so; although——

KROGSTAD.

Good. I was sitting in the restaurant opposite, and I saw your husband go down the street——

NORA.

Well?

KROGSTAD.

——with a lady

NORA.

What then?

KROGSTAD.

May I ask if the lady was a Mrs. Linden?

NORA.

Yes.

KROGSTAD.

Who has just come to town?

NORA.

Yes. To-day.

KROGSTAD.

I believe she is an intimate friend of yours

NORA.

Certainly. But I don't understand——

KROGSTAD.

I used to know her too.

NORA.

I know you did.

KROGSTAD.

Ah! You know all about it. I thought as much. Now, frankly, is Mrs. Linden to have a place in the Bank?

NORA.

How dare you catechise me in this way, Mr. Krogstad—you, a subordinate of my husband's? But since you ask, you shall know. Yes, Mrs. Linden is to be employed. And it is I who recommended her, Mr. Krogstad. Now you know.

KROGSTAD.

Then my guess was right.

NORA.

[*Walking up and down.*] You see one has a wee bit of influence, after all. It doesn't follow because one's only a woman—— When people are in a subordinate position, Mr. Krogstad, they ought really to be careful how they offend anybody who—h'm——

KROGSTAD.

——who has influence?

NORA.

Exactly.

KROGSTAD.

[*Taking another tone.*] Mrs. Helmer, will you have the kindness to employ your influence on my behalf?

NORA.

What? How do you mean?

KROGSTAD.

Will you be so good as to see that I retain my subordinate position in the Bank?

NORA.

What do you mean? Who wants to take it from you?

KROGSTAD.

Oh, you needn't pretend ignorance. I can very well understand that it cannot be pleasant for your friend to meet me; and I can also understand now for whose sake I am to be hounded out.

NORA.

But I assure you——

KROGSTAD.

Come come now, once for all: there is time yet, and I advise you to use your influence to prevent it.

NORA.

But, Mr. Krogstad, I have no influence—absolutely none.

KROGSTAD.

None? I thought you said a moment ago——

NORA.

Of course not in that sense. I! How can you imagine that I should have any such influence over my husband?

KROGSTAD.

Oh, I know your husband from our college days. I don't think he is any more inflexible than other husbands.

NORA.

If you talk disrespectfully of my husband, I must request you to leave the house.

KROGSTAD.

You are bold, madam.

NORA.

I am afraid of you no longer. When New Year's Day is over, I shall soon be out of the whole business.

KROGSTAD.

[*Controlling himself.*] Listen to me, Mrs. Helmer. If need be, I shall fight as though for my life to keep my little place in the Bank.

NORA.

Yes, so it seems.

KROGSTAD.

It's not only for the salary: that is what I care least about. It's something else—— Well, I had better make a clean breast of it. Of course you know, like every one else, that some years ago I —got into trouble.

NORA.

I think I've heard something of the sort.

KROGSTAD.

The matter never came into court; but from that moment all paths were barred to me. Then

I took up the business you know about. I had to turn my hand to something; and I don't think I've been one of the worst. But now I must get clear of it all. My sons are growing up; for their sake I must try to recover my character as well as I can. This place in the Bank was the first step; and now your husband wants to kick me off the ladder, back into the mire.

NORA.

But I assure you, Mr. Krogstad, I haven't the least power to help you.

KROGSTAD.

That is because you have not the will; but I can compel you.

NORA.

You won't tell my husband that I owe you money?

KROGSTAD.

H'm; suppose I were to?

NORA.

It would be shameful of you. [*With tears in her voice.*] The secret that is my joy and my pride—that he should learn it in such an ugly, coarse way—and from you. It would involve me in all sorts of unpleasantness——

KROGSTAD.

Only unpleasantness

NORA.

[*Hotly.*] But just do it. It's you that will come off worst, for then my husband will see what a bad

man you are, and then you certainly won't keep your place.

KROGSTAD.

I asked whether it was only domestic unpleasantness you feared?

NORA.

If my husband gets to know about it, he will of course pay you off at once, and then we shall have nothing more to do with you.

KROGSTAD.

[*Coming a pace nearer.*] Listen, Mrs. Helmer: either your memory is defective, or you don't know much about business. I must make the position a little clearer to you.

NORA.

How so?

KROGSTAD.

When your husband was ill, you came to me to borrow twelve hundred dollars.

NORA.

I knew of nobody else.

KROGSTAD.

I promised to find you the money——

NORA.

And you did find it.

KROGSTAD.

I promised to find you the money, on certain conditions. You were so much taken up at the

time about your husband's illness, and so eager to have the wherewithal for your journey, that you probably did not give much thought to the details. Allow me to remind you of them. I promised to find you the amount in exchange for a note of hand, which I drew up.

NORA.

Yes, and I signed it.

KROGSTAD.

Quite right. But then I added a few lines, making your father security for the debt. Your father was to sign this.

NORA.

Was to——? He did sign it!

KROGSTAD.

I had left the date blank. That is to say, your father was himself to date his signature. Do you recollect that?

NORA.

Yes, I believe——

KROGSTAD.

Then I gave you the paper to send to your father, by post. Is not that so?

NORA.

Yes.

KROGSTAD.

And of course you did so at once; for within five or six days you brought me back the

document with your father's signature; and I handed you the money.

NORA.

Well? Have I not made my payments punctually?

KROGSTAD.

Fairly—yes. But to return to the point: You were in great trouble at the time, Mrs. Helmer.

NORA.

I was indeed!

KROGSTAD.

Your father was very ill, I believe?

NORA.

He was on his death-bed.

KROGSTAD

And died soon after?

NORA.

Yes.

KROGSTAD.

Tell me, Mrs. Helmer: do you happen to recollect the day of his death? The day of the month, I mean?

NORA.

Father died on the 29th of September.

KROGSTAD.

Quite correct. I have made inquiries. And here comes in the remarkable point—[*Produces a paper*] which I cannot explain.

NORA.

What remarkable point? I don't know——

KROGSTAD.

The remarkable point, madam, that your father signed this paper three days after his death!

NORA.

What! I don't understand——

KROGSTAD.

Your father died on the 29th of September. But look here: he has dated his signature October 2nd! Is not that remarkable, Mrs. Helmer? [NORA *is silent*] Can you explain it? [NORA *continues silent.*] It is noteworthy, too, that the words "October 2nd" and the year are not in your father's handwriting, but in one which I believe I know. Well, this may be explained; your father may have forgotten to date his signature, and somebody may have added the date at random, before the fact of your father's death was known. There is nothing wrong in that. Everything depends on the signature. Of course it is genuine, Mrs. Helmer? It was really your father himself who wrote his name here?

NORA.

[*After a short silence, throws her head back and looks defiantly at him.*] No, it was not. *I* wrote father's name.

KROGSTAD.

Ah!—Are you aware, madam, that that is a dangerous admission?

NORA.

How so? You will soon get your money.

KROGSTAD.

May I ask you one more question? Why did you not send the paper to your father

NORA.

It was impossible. Father was ill. If I had asked him for his signature, I should have had to tell him why I wanted the money; but he was so ill I really could not tell him that my husband's life was in danger. It was impossible.

KROGSTAD.

Then it would have been better to have given up your tour.

NORA.

No, I couldn't do that; my husband's life depended on that journey. I couldn't give it up.

KROGSTAD.

And did it never occur to you that you were playing me false?

NORA.

That was nothing to me. I didn't care in the least about you. I couldn't endure you for all the cruel difficulties you made, although you knew how ill my husband was.

KROGSTAD.

Mrs. Helmer, you evidently do not realise what you have been guilty of. But I can assure you it was nothing more and nothing worse that made me an outcast from society.

NORA.

You! You want me to believe that you did a brave thing to save your wife's life?

KROGSTAD.

The law takes no account of motives.

NORA.

Then it must be a very bad law.

KROGSTAD.

Bad or not, if I produce this document in court, you will be condemned according to law.

NORA.

I don't believe that. Do you mean to tell me that a daughter has no right to spare her dying father trouble and anxiety?—that a wife has no right to save her husband's life? I don't know much about the law, but I'm sure you'll find, somewhere or another, that that is allowed. And you don't know that—you, a lawyer! You must be a bad one, Mr. Krogstad.

KROGSTAD.

Possibly. But business—such business as ours—I do understand. You believe that? Very well; now do as you please. But this I may tell you, that if I am flung into the gutter a second time, you shall keep me company.

[*Bows and goes out through hall.*

NORA.

[*Stands a while thinking, then tosses her head.*] Oh nonsense! He wants to frighten me. I'm not so foolish as that. [*Begins folding the children's*

clothes. Pauses.] But——? No, it's impossible! Why, I did it for love!

CHILDREN.

[*At the door, left.*] Mamma, the strange man has gone now.

NORA.

Yes, yes, I know. But don't tell any one about the strange man. Do you hear? Not even papa!

CHILDREN.

No, mamma; and now will you play with us again?

NORA.

No, no; not now.

CHILDREN.

Oh, do, mamma; you know you promised.

NORA.

Yes, but I can't just now. Run to the nursery; I have so much to do. Run along, run along, and be good, my darlings! [*She pushes them gently into the inner room, and closes the door behind them. Sits on the sofa, embroiders a few stitches, but soon pauses.*] No! [*Throws down the work, rises, goes to the hall door and calls out.*] Ellen, bring in the Christmas-tree! [*Goes to table, left, and opens the drawer; again pauses.*] No, it's quite impossible!

ELLEN.

[*With Christmas-tree.*] Where shall I stand it, ma'am?

NORA.

There, in the middle of the room.

ELLEN.

Shall I bring in anything else?

NORA.

No, thank you, I have all I want.

[ELLEN, *having put down the tree, goes out.*

NORA.

[*Busy dressing the tree.*] There must be a candle here—and flowers there.—That horrible man! Nonsense, nonsense! there's nothing to be afraid of. The Christmas-tree shall be beautiful. I'll do everything to please you, Torvald; I'll sing and dance, and——

Enter HELMER *by the hall door, with a bundle of documents.*

NORA.

Oh You're back already?

HELMER.

Yes. Has anybody been here.

NORA.

Here? No.

HELMER.

That's odd. I saw Krogstad come out of the house.

NORA.

Did you? Oh, yes, by-the-bye, he was here for a minute.

HELMER.

Nora, I can see by your manner that he has been begging you to put in a good word for him.

NORA.

Yes.

HELMER.

And you were to do it as if of your own accord? You were to say nothing to me of his having been here. Didn't he suggest that too?

NORA.

Yes, Torvald; but——

HELMER.

Nora, Nora! And you could condescend to that! To speak to such a man, to make him a promise! And then to tell me an untruth about it!

NORA.

An untruth!

HELMER.

Didn't you say that nobody had been here? [*Threatens with his finger.*] My little bird must never do that again! A song-bird must sing clear and true; no false notes. [*Puts his arm round her.*] That's so, isn't it? Yes, I was sure of it. [*Lets her go.*] And now we'll say no more about it. [*Sits down before the fire.*] Oh, how cosy and quiet it is here! [*Glances into his documents.*

NORA.

[*Busy with the tree, after a short silence.*] Torvald!

HELMER.

Yes.

NORA.

I'm looking forward so much to the Stenborgs' fancy ball the day after to-morrow.

HELMER.

And I'm on tenterhooks to see what surprise you have in store for me.

NORA.

Oh, it's too tiresome!

HELMER.

What is?

NORA.

I can't think of anything good. Everything seems so foolish and meaningless.

HELMER.

Has little Nora made that discovery?

NORA.

[*Behind his chair, with her arms on the back.*] Are you very busy, Torvald?

HELMER.

Well——

NORA.

What papers are those?

HELMER.

Bank business.

NORA.

Already!

HELMER.

I have got the retiring manager to let me make some necessary changes in the staff and the organization. I can do this during Christmas week. I want to have everything straight by the New Year.

NORA.

Then that's why that poor Krogstad——

HELMER.

H'm.

NORA.

[*Still leaning over the chair-back and slowly stroking his hair.*] If you hadn't been so very busy, I should have asked you a great, great favour, Torvald.

HELMER.

What can it be? Out with it.

NORA.

Nobody has such perfect taste as you; and I should so love to look well at the fancy ball. Torvald, dear, couldn't you take me in hand, and settle what I'm to be, and arrange my costume for me?

HELMER.

Aha! So my wilful little woman is at a loss, and making signals of distress.

NORA.

Yes, please, Torvald. I can't get on without your help.

HELMER.

Well, well, I'll think it over, and we'll soon hit upon something.

NORA.

Oh, how good that is of you! [*Goes to the tree again; pause.*] How well the red flowers show. —Tell me, was it anything so very dreadful this Krogstad got into trouble about?

HELMER.

Forgery, that's all. Don't you know what that means?

NORA.

Mayn't he have been driven to it by need?

HELMER.

Yes; or, like so many others, he may have done it in pure heedlessness. I am not so hard-hearted as to condemn a man absolutely for a single fault.

NORA.

No, surely not, Torvald!

HELMER.

Many a man can retrieve his character, if he owns his crime and takes the punishment.

NORA.

Punishment——?

HELMER.

But Krogstad didn't do that. He evaded the law by means of tricks and subterfuges; and that is what has morally ruined him.

NORA.

Do you think that——?

HELMER.

Just think how a man with a thing of that sort on his conscience must be always lying and canting and shamming. Think of the mask he must wear even towards those who stand nearest him —towards his own wife and children. The effect

on the children—that's the most terrible part of it, Nora.

NORA.

Why ?

HELMER.

Because in such an atmosphere of lies home life is poisoned and contaminated in every fibre. Every breath the children draw contains some germ of evil.

NORA.

[*Closer behind him.*] Are you sure of that ?

HELMER.

As a lawyer, my dear, I have seen it often enough. Nearly all cases of early corruption may be traced to lying mothers.

NORA.

Why—mothers ?

HELMER.

It generally comes from the mother's side ; but of course the father's influence may act in the same way. Every lawyer knows it too well. And here has this Krogstad been poisoning his own children for years past by a life of lies and hypocrisy—that is why I call him morally ruined. [*Holds out both hands to her.*] So my sweet little Nora must promise not to plead his cause. Shake hands upon it. Come, come, what's this ? Give me your hand. That's right. Then it's a bargain. I assure you it would have been impossible for me to work with him. It gives me a positive sense of physical discomfort to come in contact with such people.

[NORA *draws her hand away, and moves to the other side of the Christmas-tree.*

NORA.

How warm it is here. And I have so much to do.

HELMER.

[*Rises and gathers up his papers.*] Yes, and I must try to get some of these papers looked through before dinner. And I shall think over your costume too. Perhaps I may even find something to hang in gilt paper on the Christmas-tree. [*Lays his hand on her head.*] My precious little song-bird!

[*He goes into his room and shuts the door.*

NORA.

[*Softly, after a pause.*] It can't be. It's impossible. It must be impossible!

ANNA.

[*At the door, left.*] The little ones are begging so prettily to come to mamma.

NORA.

No, no, no; don't let them come to me! Keep them with you, Anna.

ANNA.

Very well, ma'am. [*Shuts the door.*

NORA.

[*Pale with terror.*] Corrupt my children!—Poison my home! [*Short pause. She throws back her head.*] It's not true! It can never, never be true!

ACT SECOND

The same room. In the corner, beside the piano, stands the Christmas-tree, stripped, and with the candles burnt out. NORA'S *outdoor things lie on the sofa.*

NORA, *alone, is walking about restlessly. At last she stops by the sofa, and takes up her cloak.*

NORA.

[*Dropping the cloak.*] There's somebody coming! [*Goes to the hall door and listens.*] Nobody; of course nobody will come to-day, Christmas-day; nor to-morrow either. But perhaps—— [*Opens the door and looks out.*] —No, nothing in the letter box; quite empty. [*Comes forward.*] Stuff and nonsense! Of course he won't really do anything. Such a thing couldn't happen. It's impossible! Why, I have three little children.

ANNA *enters from the left, with a large cardboard box.*

ANNA.

I've found the box with the fancy dress at last

NORA.

Thanks; put it down on the table.

ANNA.

[*Does so.*] But I'm afraid it's very much out of order.

NORA.

Oh, I wish I could tear it into a hundred thousand pieces!

ANNA.

Oh, no. It can easily be put to rights—just a little patience.

NORA.

I shall go and get Mrs. Linden to help me.

ANNA.

Going out again? In such weather as this! You'll catch cold, ma'am, and be ill.

NORA.

Worse things might happen.—What are the children doing?

ANNA.

They're playing with their Christmas presents, poor little dears; but——

NORA.

Do they often ask for me?

ANNA.

You see they've been so used to having their mamma with them.

NORA.

Yes; but, Anna, I can't have them so much with me in future.

ANNA.

Well, little children get used to anything.

NORA.

Do you think they do? Do you believe they would forget their mother if she went quite away?

ANNA.

Gracious me! Quite away?

NORA.

Tell me, Anna—I've so often wondered about it—how could you bring yourself to give your child up to strangers?

ANNA.

I had to when I came to nurse my little Miss Nora.

NORA.

But how could you make up your mind to it?

ANNA.

When I had the chance of such a good place? A poor girl who's been in trouble must take what comes. That wicked man did nothing for me.

NORA.

But your daughter must have forgotten you.

ANNA.

Oh, no, ma'am, that she hasn't. She wrote to me both when she was confirmed and when she was married.

NORA.

[*Embracing her.*] Dear old Anna—you were a good mother to me when I was little.

ANNA.

My poor little Nora had no mother but me.

NORA.

And if my little ones had nobody else, I'm sure you would—— Nonsense, nonsense! [*Opens the box.*] Go in to the children. Now I must—— You'll see how lovely I shall be to-morrow.

ANNA.

I'm sure there will be no one at the ball so lovely as my Miss Nora.

[*She goes into the room on the left.*

NORA.

[*Takes the costume out of the box, but soon throws it down again.*] Oh, if I dared go out. If only nobody would come. If only nothing would happen here in the meantime. Rubbish; nobody is coming. Only not to think. What a delicious muff! Beautiful gloves, beautiful gloves! To forget—to forget! One, two, three, four, five, six—— [*With a scream.*] Ah, there they come.

[*Goes towards the door, then stands irresolute.*

MRS. LINDEN *enters from the hall, where she has taken off her things.*

NORA.

Oh, it's you, Christina. There's nobody else there? I'm so glad you have come.

MRS. LINDEN.

I hear you called at my lodgings.

NORA.

Yes, I was just passing. There's something you

must help me with. Let us sit here on the sofa —so. To-morrow evening there's to be a fancy ball at Consul Stenborg's overhead, and Torvald wants me to appear as a Neapolitan fisher-girl, and dance the tarantella; I learned it at Capri.

MRS. LINDEN.

I see—quite a performance.

NORA.

Yes, Torvald wishes it. Look, this is the costume; Torvald had it made for me in Italy. But now it's all so torn, I don't know——

MRS. LINDEN.

Oh, we shall soon set that to rights. It's only the trimming that has come loose here and there. Have you a needle and thread? Ah, here's the very thing.

NORA.

Oh, how kind of you.

MRS. LINDEN.

[*Sewing.*] So you're to be in costume to-morrow, Nora? I'll tell you what—I shall come in for a moment to see you in all your glory. But I've quite forgotten to thank you for the pleasant evening yesterday.

NORA.

[*Rises and walks across the room.*] Oh, yesterday, it didn't seem so pleasant as usual.—You should have come to town a little sooner, Christina.—Torvald has certainly the art of making home bright and beautiful.

MRS. LINDEN.

You too, I should think, or you wouldn't be your father's daughter. But tell me—is Doctor Rank always so depressed as he was last evening?

NORA.

No, yesterday it was particularly noticeable. You see, he suffers from a dreadful illness. He has spinal consumption, poor fellow. They say his father was a horrible man, who kept mistresses and all sorts of things—so the son has been sickly from his childhood, you understand.

MRS. LINDEN.

[*Lets her sewing fall into her lap.*] Why, my darling Nora, how do you come to know such things?

NORA.

[*Moving about the room.*] Oh, when one has three children, one sometimes has visits from women who are half—half doctors—and they talk of one thing and another.

MRS. LINDEN.

[*Goes on sewing; a short pause.*] Does Doctor Rank come here every day?

NORA.

Every day of his life. He has been Torvald's most intimate friend from boyhood, and he's a good friend of mine too. Doctor Rank is quite one of the family.

MRS. LINDEN.

But tell me—is he quite sincere? I mean, isn't he rather given to flattering people?

NORA.

No, quite the contrary. Why should you think so?

MRS. LINDEN.

When you introduced us yesterday he said he had often heard my name; but I noticed afterwards that your husband had no notion who I was. How could Doctor Rank——?

NORA.

He was quite right, Christina. You see, Torvald loves me so indescribably, he wants to have me all to himself, as he says. When we were first married he was almost jealous if I even mentioned any of my old friends at home; so naturally I gave up doing it. But I often talk of the old times to Doctor Rank, for he likes to hear about them.

MRS. LINDEN.

Listen to me, Nora! You are still a child in many ways. I am older than you, and have had more experience. I'll tell you something? You ought to get clear of all this with Dr. Rank.

NORA.

Get clear of what?

MRS. LINDEN.

The whole affair, I should say. You were talking yesterday of a rich admirer who was to find you money——

NORA.

Yes, one who never existed, worse luck. What then?

MRS. LINDEN.

Has Doctor Rank money?

NORA.

Yes, he has.

MRS. LINDEN.

And nobody to provide for?

NORA.

Nobody. But—— ?

MRS. LINDEN.

And he comes here every day?

NORA.

Yes, I told you so.

MRS. LINDEN.

I should have thought he would have had better taste.

NORA.

I don't understand you a bit.

MRS. LINDEN.

Don't pretend, Nora. Do you suppose I can't guess who lent you the twelve hundred dollars?

NORA.

Aré you out of your senses? How can you think such a thing? A friend who comes here every day! Why, the position would be unbearable!

MRS. LINDEN.

Then it really is not he?

NORA.

No, I assure you. It never for a moment occurred to me—— Besides, at that time he had nothing to lend; he came into his property afterwards.

MRS. LINDEN.

Well, I believe that was lucky for you, Nora dear.

NORA.

No, really, it would never have struck me to ask Dr. Rank—— And yet, I'm certain that if I did——

MRS. LINDEN.

But of course you never would.

NORA.

Of course not. It's inconceivable that it should ever be necessary. But I'm quite sure that if I spoke to Doctor Rank——

MRS. LINDEN.

Behind your husband's back?

NORA.

I must get clear of the other thing; that's behind his back too. I must get clear of that.

MRS. LINDEN.

Yes, yes, I told you so yesterday; but——

NORA.

[*Walking up and down.*] A man can manage these things much better than a woman.

MRS. LINDEN.

One's own husband, yes.

NORA.

Nonsense. [*Stands still.*] When everything is paid, one gets back the paper.

MRS. LINDEN.

Of course.

NORA.

And can tear it into a hundred thousand pieces, and burn it up, the nasty, filthy thing!

MRS. LINDEN.

[*Looks at her fixedly, lays down her work, and rises slowly.*] Nora, you are hiding something from me.

NORA.

Can you see it in my face?

MRS. LINDEN.

Something has happened since yesterday morning. Nora, what is it?

NORA.

[*Going towards her.*] Christina——! [*Listens.*] Hush! There's Torvald coming home. Do you mind going into the nursery for the present? Torvald can't bear to see dressmaking going on. Get Anna to help you.

MRS. LINDEN.

[*Gathers some of the things together.*] Very well; but I shan't go away until you have told me all about it.

[*She goes out to the left, as* HELMER *enters from the hall.*

NORA.

[*Runs to meet him*] Oh, how I've been longing for you to come, Torvald dear!

HELMER.

Was that the dressmaker——?

NORA.

No, Christina. She's helping me with my costume. You'll see how nice I shall look.

HELMER.

Yes, wasn't that a happy thought of mine?

NORA.

Splendid! But isn't it good of me, too, to have given in to you about the tarantella?

HELMER.

[*Takes her under the chin.*] Good of you! To give in to your own husband? Well well, you little madcap, I know you don't mean it. But I won't disturb you. I daresay you want to be "trying on"

NORA.

And you are going to work, I suppose?

HELMER.

Yes. [*Shows her a bundle of papers.*] Look here. I've just come from the Bank——

[*Goes towards his room.*

NORA.

Torvald.

HELMER.

[*Stopping.*] Yes?

NORA.

If your little squirrel were to beg you for something so prettily——

HELMER.

Well?

NORA.

Would you do it?

HELMER.

I must know first what it is.

NORA.

The squirrel would skip about and play all sorts of tricks if you would only be nice and kind.

HELMER.

Come, then, out with it.

NORA.

Your lark would twitter from morning till night——

HELMER

Oh, that she does in any case.

NORA.

I'll be an elf and dance in the moonlight for you, Torvald.

HELMER.

Nora—you can't mean what you were hinting at this morning?

NORA.

[*Coming nearer.*] Yes, Torvald, I beg and implore you!

HELMER.

Have you really the courage to begin that again?

NORA.

Yes, yes; for my sake, you must let Krogstad keep his place in the Bank.

HELMER.

My dear Nora, it's his place I intend for Mrs. Linden.

NORA.

Yes, that's so good of you. But instead of Krogstad, you could dismiss some other clerk.

HELMER.

Why, this is incredible obstinacy! Because you have thoughtlessly promised to put in a word for him, I am to——!

NORA.

It's not that, Torvald. It's for your own sake. This man writes for the most scurrilous newspapers; you said so yourself. He can do you no end of harm. I'm so terribly afraid of him——

HELMER.

Ah, I understand; it's old recollections that are frightening you.

NORA.

What do you mean?

HELMER.

Of course you're thinking of your father.

NORA.

Yes—yes, of course. Only think of the shameful slanders wicked people used to write about father. I believe they would have got him dismissed if you hadn't been sent to look into the thing, and been kind to him, and helped him.

HELMER.

My little Nora, between your father and me there is all the difference in the world. Your father was not altogether unimpeachable. I am; and I hope to remain so.

NORA.

Oh, no one knows what wicked men may hit upon. We could live so quietly and happily now, in our cosy, peaceful home, you and I and the children, Torvald! That's why I beg and implore you ——

HELMER.

And it is just by pleading his cause that you make it impossible for me to keep him. It's already known at the Bank that I intend to dismiss Krogstad. If it were now reported that the new manager let himself be turned round his wife's little finger——

NORA.

What then?

HELMER.

Oh, nothing, so long as a wilful woman can have her way——! I am to make myself a laughing-stock to the whole staff, and set people saying that I am open to all sorts of outside influence? Take my word for it, I should soon

feel the consequences. And besides—there is one thing that makes Krogstad impossible for me to work with——

NORA.

What thing ?

HELMER.

I could perhaps have overlooked his moral failings at a pinch——

NORA.

Yes, couldn't you, Torvald ?

HELMER.

And I hear he is good at his work. But the fact is, he was a college chum of mine—there was one of those rash friendships between us that one so often repents of later. I may as well confess it at once—he calls me by my Christian name ;[1] and he is tactless enough to do it even when others are present. He delights in putting on airs of familiarity—Torvald here, Torvald there ! I assure you it's most painful to me. He would make my position at the Bank perfectly unendurable.

NORA.

Torvald, surely you're not serious ?

HELMER.

No ? Why not ?

NORA.

That's such a petty reason.

HELMER.

What ! Petty ! Do you consider me petty !

[1] In the original, "We say 'thou' to each other."

NORA.

No, on the contrary, Torvald dear; and that's just why——

HELMER.

Never mind; you call my motives petty; then I must be petty too. Petty! Very well!—Now we'll put an end to this, once for all. [*Goes to the door into the hall and calls.*] Ellen!

NORA.

What do you want?

HELMER.

[*Searching among his papers.*] To settle the thing. [ELLEN *enters.*] Here; take this letter; give it to a messenger. See that he takes it at once. The address is on it. Here's the money.

ELLEN.

Very well, sir. [*Goes with the letter.*

HELMER.

[*Putting his papers together.*] There, Madam Obstinacy.

NORA.

[*Breathless.*] Torvald—what was in the letter?

HELMER.

Krogstad's dismissal.

NORA.

Call it back again, Torvald! There's still time. Oh, Torvald, call it back again! For my sake, for your own, for the children's sake! Do you hear, Torvald? Do it! You don't know what that letter may bring upon us all.

HELMER.

Too late.

NORA.

Yes, too late.

HELMER.

My dear Nora, I forgive your anxiety, though it's anything but flattering to me. Why should you suppose that *I* would be afraid of a wretched scribbler's spite? But I forgive you all the same, for it's a proof of your great love for me. [*Takes her in his arms.*] That's as it should be, my own dear Nora. Let what will happen—when it comes to the pinch, I shall have strength and courage enough. You shall see: my shoulders are broad enough to bear the whole burden.

NORA.

[*Terror-struck.*] What do you mean by that?

HELMER.

The whole burden, I say——

NORA.

[*With decision.*] That you shall never, never do!

HELMER.

Very well; then we'll share it, Nora, as man and wife. That is how it should be. [*Petting her.*] Are you satisfied now? Come, come, come, don't look like a scared dove. It's all nothing—foolish fancies.—Now you ought to play the tarantella through and practise with the tambourine. I shall sit in my inner room and shut both doors, so that I shall hear nothing. You can make as much noise as you please. [*Turns*

round in doorway.] And when Rank comes, just tell him where I'm to be found.

[*He nods to her, and goes with his papers into his room, closing the door.*

NORA.

[*Bewildered with terror, stands as though rooted to the ground, and whispers.*] He would do it. Yes, he would do it. He would do it, in spite of all the world.—No, never that, never, never! Anything rather than that! Oh, for some way of escape! What shall I do——! [*Hall bell rings.*] Doctor Rank——!—Anything, anything, rather than——!

[NORA *draws her hands over her face, pulls herself together, goes to the door and opens it.* RANK *stands outside hanging up his fur coat. During what follows it begins to grow dark.*

NORA.

Good afternoon, Doctor Rank. I knew you by your ring. But you mustn't go to Torvald now. I believe he's busy.

RANK.

And you? [*Enters and closes the door.*

NORA.

Oh, you know very well, I have always time for you.

RANK.

Thank you. I shall avail myself of your kindness as long as I can.

NORA.

What do you mean? As long as you can?

RANK.

Yes. Does that frighten you?

NORA.

I think it's an odd expression. Do you expect anything to happen?

RANK.

Something I have long been prepared for; but I didn't think it would come so soon.

NORA.

[*Catching at his arm.*] What have you discovered? Doctor Rank, you must tell me!

RANK.

[*Sitting down by the stove.*] I am running down hill. There's no help for it.

NORA.

[*Draws a long breath of relief.*] It's you——?

RANK.

Who else should it be?—Why lie to one's self? I am the most wretched of all my patients, Mrs. Helmer. In these last days I have been auditing my life-account—bankrupt! Perhaps before a month is over, I shall lie rotting in the churchyard.

NORA.

Oh! What an ugly way to talk.

RANK.

The thing itself is so confoundedly ugly, you see. But the worst of it is, so many other ugly things have to be gone through first. There is

only one last investigation to be made, and when that is over I shall know pretty certainly when the break-up will begin. There's one thing I want to say to you: Helmer's delicate nature shrinks so from all that is horrible: I will not have him in my sick-room——

NORA.

But, Doctor Rank——

RANK.

I won't have him, I say—not on any account! I shall lock my door against him.—As soon as I am quite certain of the worst, I shall send you my visiting-card with a black cross on it; and then you will know that the final horror has begun.

NORA.

Why, you're perfectly unreasonable to-day; and I did so want you to be in a really good humour.

RANK.

With death staring me in the face?—And to suffer thus for another's sin! Where's the justice of it? And in one way or another you can trace in every family some such inexorable retribution——

NORA.

[*Stopping her ears.*] Nonsense, nonsense! Now cheer up!

RANK.

Well, after all, the whole thing's only worth laughing at. My poor innocent spine must do penance for my father's wild oats.

NORA.

[*At table, left.*] I suppose he was too fond of asparagus and Strasbourg pâté, wasn't he?

RANK.

Yes; and truffles.

NORA.

Yes, truffles, to be sure. And oysters, I believe?

RANK.

Yes, oysters; oysters, of course.

NORA.

And then all the port and champagne! It's sad that all these good things should attack the spine.

RANK.

Especially when the luckless spine attacked never had any good of them.

NORA.

Ah, yes, that's the worst of it.

RANK.

[*Looks at her searchingly.*] H'm——

NORA.

[*A moment later.*] Why did you smile?

RANK.

No; it was you that laughed.

NORA.

No; it was you that smiled, Dr. Rank.

RANK.

[*Standing up.*] I see you're deeper than I thought.

NORA.

I'm in such a crazy mood to-day.

RANK.

So it seems.

NORA.

[*With her hands on his shoulders.*] Dear, dear Doctor Rank, death shall not take you away from Torvald and me.

RANK.

Oh, you'll easily get over the loss. The absent are soon forgotten.

NORA.

[*Looks at him anxiously.*] Do you think so?

RANK.

People make fresh ties, and then——

NORA.

Who make fresh ties?

RANK.

You and Helmer will, when I am gone. You yourself are taking time by the forelock, it seems to me. What was that Mrs. Linden doing here yesterday?

NORA.

Oh! — you're surely not jealous of poor Christina?

RANK.

Yes, I am. She will be my successor in this house. When I am out of the way, this woman will perhaps——

NORA.

Hush! Not so loud! She's in there.

RANK.

To-day as well? You see!

NORA.

Only to put my costume in order—dear me, how unreasonable you are! [*Sits on sofa.*] Now do be good, Doctor Rank! To-morrow you shall see how beautifully I shall dance; and then you may fancy that I'm doing it all to please you—and of course Torvald as well. [*Takes various things out of box.*] Doctor Rank, sit down here, and I'll show you something.

RANK.

[*Sitting.*] What is it?

NORA.

Look here. Look!

RANK.

Silk stockings.

NORA.

Flesh-coloured. Aren't they lovely? It's so dark here now; but to-morrow—— No, no, no; you must only look at the feet. Oh, well, I suppose you may look at the rest too.

RANK.

H'm——

NORA.

What are you looking so critical about? Do you think they won't fit me?

RANK.

I can't possibly give any competent opinion on that point.

NORA.

[*Looking at him a moment.*] For shame! [*Hits him lightly on the ear with the stockings.*] Take that. [*Rolls them up again.*

RANK.

And what other wonders am I to see?

NORA.

You sha'n't see anything more; for you don't behave nicely.

[*She hums a little and searches among the things.*

RANK.

[*After a short silence.*] When I sit here gossiping with you, I can't imagine—I simply cannot conceive—what would have become of me if I had never entered this house.

NORA.

[*Smiling.*] Yes, I think you do feel at home with us.

RANK.

[*More softly—looking straight before him.*] And now to have to leave it all——

NORA.

Nonsense. You sha'n't leave us.

RANK.

[*In the same tone.*] And not to be able to leave behind the slightest token of gratitude; scarcely even a passing regret—nothing but an empty place, that can be filled by the first comer.

NORA.

And if I were to ask you for——? No——

RANK.

For what?

NORA.

For a great proof of your friendship.

RANK.

Yes—yes?

NORA.

I mean—for a very, very great service——

RANK.

Would you really, for once, make me so happy?

NORA.

Oh, you don't know what it is.

RANK.

Then tell me.

NORA.

No, I really can't, Doctor Rank. It's far, far too much—not only a service, but help and advice besides——

RANK.

So much the better. I can't think what you can mean. But go on. Don't you trust me?

NORA.

As I trust no one else. I know you are my best and truest friend. So I will tell you. Well then, Doctor Rank, there is something you must help me to prevent. You know how deeply, how wonderfully Torvald loves me; he wouldn't hesitate a moment to give his very life for my sake.

RANK.

[*Bending towards her.*] Nora—do you think he is the only one who——?

NORA.

[*With a slight start.*] Who——?

RANK.

Who would gladly give his life for you?

NORA.

[*Sadly.*] Oh!

RANK.

I have sworn that you shall know it before I—go. I shall never find a better opportunity.—Yes, Nora, now I have told you; and now you know that you can trust me as you can no one else.

NORA.

[*Standing up; simply and calmly.*] Let me pass, please.

RANK.

[*Makes way for her, but remains sitting.*] Nora——

NORA.

[*In the doorway.*] Ellen, bring the lamp. [*Crosses to the stove.*] Oh dear, Doctor Rank, that was too bad of you.

RANK.

[*Rising.*] That I have loved you as deeply as—any one else? Was that too bad of me?

NORA.

No, but that you should have told me so. It was so unnecessary——

RANK.

What do you mean? Did you know——?

[ELLEN *enters with the lamp; sets it on the table and goes out again.*

RANK.

Nora—Mrs. Helmer—I ask you, did you know?

NORA.

Oh, how can I tell what I knew or didn't know? I really can't say—— How could you be so clumsy, Doctor Rank? It was all so nice!

RANK.

Well, at any rate, you know now that I am at your service, body and soul. And now, go on.

NORA.

[*Looking at him.*] Go on—now?

RANK.

I beg you to tell me what you want.

NORA.

I can tell you nothing now.

RANK.

Yes, yes! You mustn't punish me in that way. Let me do for you whatever a man can.

NORA.

You can do nothing for me now.—Besides, I really want no help. You shall see it was only my fancy. Yes, it must be so. Of course! [*Sits in the rocking-chair, looks at him and smiles.*] You are a nice person, Doctor Rank! Aren't you ashamed of yourself, now that the lamp is on the table?

RANK.

No; not exactly. But perhaps I ought to go—for ever.

NORA.

No, indeed you mustn't. Of course you must come and go as you've always done. You know very well that Torvald can't do without you.

RANK.

Yes, but you?

NORA.

Oh, you know I always like to have you here.

RANK.

That is just what led me astray. You are a riddle to me. It has often seemed to me as if you liked being with me almost as much as being with Helmer.

NORA.

Yes; don't you see? There are people one loves, and others one likes to talk to.

RANK.

Yes—there's something in that.

NORA.

When I was a girl, of course I loved papa best. But it always delighted me to steal into the servants' room. In the first place they never lectured me, and in the second it was such fun to hear them talk.

RANK.

Ah, I see; then it's their place I have taken?

NORA.

[*Jumps up and hurries towards him.*] Oh, my

dear Doctor Rank, I don't mean that. But you understand, with Torvald it's the same as with papa——

ELLEN *enters from the hall.*

ELLEN.

Please, ma'am—— [*Whispers to* NORA, *and gives her a card.*]

NORA.

[*Glancing at card.*] Ah! [*Puts it in her pocket.*

RANK.

Anything wrong?

NORA.

No, no, not in the least. It's only—it's my new costume——

RANK.

Your costume! Why, it's there.

NORA.

Oh, that one, yes. But this is another that—I have ordered it—Torvald mustn't know——

RANK.

Aha! So that's the great secret.

NORA.

Yes, of course. Please go to him; he's in the inner room. Do keep him while I——

RANK.

Don't be alarmed; he sha'n't escape.

[*Goes into* HELMER'S *room.*

NORA.

[*To* ELLEN.] Is he waiting in the kitchen?

ELLEN.

Yes, he came up the back stair——

NORA.

Didn't you tell him I was engaged?

ELLEN.

Yes, but it was no use.

NORA.

He won't go away?

ELLEN.

No, ma'am, not until he has spoken to you.

NORA.

Then let him come in; but quietly. And, Ellen —say nothing about it; it's a surprise for my husband.

ELLEN.

Oh, yes, ma'am, I understand. [*She goes out.*

NORA.

It is coming! The dreadful thing is coming, after all. No, no, no, it can never be; it shall not!

[*She goes to* HELMER'S *door and slips the bolt.* ELLEN *opens the hall door for* KROGSTAD, *and shuts it after him. He wears a travelling-coat, high boots, and a fur cap.*

NORA.

[*Goes towards him.*] Speak softly; my husband is at home.

KROGSTAD.

All right. That's nothing to me.

NORA.

What do you want?

KROGSTAD.

A little information.

NORA.

Be quick, then. What is it?

KROGSTAD.

You know I have got my dismissal.

NORA.

I couldn't prevent it, Mr. Krogstad. I fought for you to the last, but it was of no use.

KROGSTAD.

Does your husband care for you so little? He knows what I can bring upon you, and yet he dares——

NORA.

How could you think I should tell him?

KROGSTAD.

Well, as a matter of fact, I didn't think it. It wasn't like my friend Torvald Helmer to show so much courage——

NORA.

Mr. Krogstad, be good enough to speak respectfully of my husband.

KROGSTAD.

Certainly, with all due respect. But since you are so anxious to keep the matter secret, I suppose you are a little clearer than yesterday as to what you have done.

NORA.

Clearer than you could ever make me.

KROGSTAD.

Yes, such a bad lawyer as I——

NORA.

What is it you want?

KROGSTAD.

Only to see how you are getting on, Mrs. Helmer. I've been thinking about you all day. Even a mere money-lender, a gutter-journalist, a—in short, a creature like me—has a little bit of what people call feeling.

NORA.

Then show it; think of my little children.

KROGSTAD.

Did you and your husband think of mine? But enough of that. I only wanted to tell you that you needn't take this matter too seriously. I shall not lodge any information, for the present.

NORA.

No, surely not. I knew you wouldn't.

KROGSTAD.

The whole thing can be settled quite amicably. Nobody need know. It can remain among us three.

NORA.

My husband must never know.

KROGSTAD.

How can you prevent it? Can you pay off the balance?

NORA.

No, not at once.

KROGSTAD.

Or have you any means of raising the money in the next few days?

NORA.

None—that I will make use of.

KROGSTAD.

And if you had, it would not help you now. If you offered me ever so much money down, you should not get back your I.O.U.

NORA.

Tell me what you want to do with it.

KROGSTAD.

I only want to keep it—to have it in my possession. No outsider shall hear anything of it. So, if you have any desperate scheme in your head——

NORA.

What if I have?

KROGSTAD.

If you should think of leaving your husband and children——

NORA.

What if I do?

KROGSTAD.

Or if you should think of—something worse——

NORA.

How do you know that?

KROGSTAD.

Put all that out of your head.

NORA.

How did you know what I had in my mind?

KROGSTAD.

Most of us think of that at first. I thought of it, too; but I hadn't the courage——

NORA.

[*Tonelessly.*] Nor I.

KROGSTAD.

[*Relieved.*] No, one hasn't. You haven't the courage either, have you?

NORA.

I haven't, I haven't.

KROGSTAD.

Besides, it would be very foolish.—Just one domestic storm, and it's all over. I have a letter in my pocket for your husband——

NORA.

Telling him everything?

KROGSTAD.

Sparing you as much as possible.

NORA.

[*Quickly.*] He must never read that letter. Tear it up. I will manage to get the money somehow——

KROGSTAD.

Pardon me, Mrs. Helmer, but I believe I told you——

NORA.

Oh, I'm not talking about the money I owe you.

Tell me how much you demand from my husband —I will get it.

KROGSTAD.

I demand no money from your husband.

NORA.

What do you demand then?

KROGSTAD.

I will tell you. I want to regain my footing in the world. I want to rise; and your husband shall help me to do it. For the last eighteen months my record has been spotless; I have been in bitter need all the time; but I was content to fight my way up, step by step. Now, I've been thrust down again, and I will not be satisfied with merely being reinstated as a matter of grace. I want to rise, I tell you. I must get into the Bank again, in a higher position than before. Your husband shall create a place on purpose for me——

NORA.

He will never do that!

KROGSTAD.

He will do it; I know him—he won't dare to show fight! And when he and I are together there, you shall soon see! Before a year is out I shall be the manager's right hand. It won't be Torvald Helmer, but Nils Krogstad, that manages the Joint Stock Bank.

NORA.

That shall never be.

KROGSTAD.

Perhaps you will——?

NORA.

Now I have the courage for it.

KROGSTAD.

Oh, you don't frighten me! A sensitive, petted creature like you——

NORA.

You shall see, you shall see!

KROGSTAD.

Under the ice, perhaps? Down into the cold, black water? And next spring to come up again, ugly, hairless, unrecognisable——

NORA.

You can't terrify me.

KROGSTAD.

Nor you me. People don't do that sort of thing, Mrs. Helmer. And, after all, what would be the use of it? I have your husband in my pocket, all the same.

NORA.

Afterwards? When I am no longer——?

KROGSTAD.

You forget, your reputation remains in my hands! [NORA *stands speechless and looks at him.*] Well, now you are prepared. Do nothing foolish. As soon as Helmer has received my letter, I shall expect to hear from him. And remember that it is your husband himself who has forced me back again into such paths. That I will never forgive him. Good-bye, Mrs. Helmer.

[*Goes out through the hall.* NORA *hurries to the door, opens it a little, and listens.*

NORA.

He's going. He's not putting the letter into the box. No, no, it would be impossible! [*Opens the door further and further.*] What's that. He's standing still; not going down stairs. Has he changed his mind? Is he——? [*A letter falls into the box.* KROGSTAD'S *footsteps are heard gradually receding down the stair.* NORA *utters a suppressed shriek, and rushes forward towards the sofa-table; pause.*] In the letter-box! [*Slips shrinkingly up to the hall door.*] There it lies.—Torvald, Torvald—now we are lost!

MRS. LINDEN *enters from the left with the costume.*

MRS. LINDEN.

There, I think it's all right now. Shall we just try it on?

NORA.

[*Hoarsely and softly.*] Christina, come here.

MRS. LINDEN.

[*Throws down the dress on the sofa.*] What's the matter? You look quite distracted.

NORA.

Come here Do you see that letter? There, see—through the glass of the letter-box.

MRS. LINDEN.

Yes, yes, I see it.

NORA.

That latter is from Krogstad——

MRS. LINDEN.

Nora- it was Krogstad who lent you the money?

NORA.

Yes; and now Torvald will know everything.

MRS. LINDEN.

Believe me, Nora, it's the best thing for both of you.

NORA.

You don't know all yet. I have forged a name——

MRS. LINDEN.

Good heavens!

NORA.

Now, listen to me, Christina; you shall bear me witness ——

MRS. LINDEN.

How "witness"? What am I to——?

NORA.

If I should go out of my mind—it might easily happen ——

MRS. LINDEN.

Nora!

NORA.

Or if anything else should happen to me—so that I couldn't be here——!

MRS. LINDEN.

Nora, Nora, you're quite beside yourself!

NORA.

In case any one wanted to take it all upon himself—the whole blame—you understand——

MRS. LINDEN.

Yes, yes; but how can you think——?

NORA.

You shall bear witness that it's not true, Christina. I'm not out of my mind at all; I know quite well what I'm saying; and I tell you nobody else knew anything about it; I did the whole thing, I myself. Remember that.

MRS. LINDEN.

I shall remember. But I don't understand what you mean——

NORA.

Oh, how should you? It's the miracle coming to pass.

MRS. LINDEN.

The miracle?

NORA.

Yes, the miracle. But it's so terrible, Christina; it mustn't happen for all the world.

MRS. LINDEN.

I shall go straight to Krogstad and talk to him.

NORA.

Don't; he'll do you some harm.

MRS. LINDEN.

Once he would have done anything for me.

NORA.

He?

MRS. LINDEN.

Where does he live?

NORA.

Oh, how can I tell——? Yes—— [*Feels in*

her pocket.] Here's his card. But the letter, the letter——!

HELMER.

[*Knocking outside.*] Nora!

NORA.

[*Shrieks in terror.*] Oh, what is it? What do you want?

HELMER.

Well, well, don't be frightened. We're not coming in; you've bolted the door. Are you trying on your dress?

NORA.

Yes, yes, I'm trying it on. It suits me so well, Torvald.

MRS. LINDEN.

[*Who has read the card.*] Why, he lives close by here.

NORA.

Yes, but it's no use now. We are lost. The letter is there in the box.

MRS. LINDEN.

And your husband has the key?

NORA.

Always.

MRS. LINDEN

Krogstad must demand his letter back, unread. He must find some pretext——

NORA.

But this is the very time when Torvald generally——

MRS. LINDEN.

Prevent him. Keep him occupied. I shall come back as quickly as I can.

[*She goes out hastily by the hall door.*

NORA.

[*Opens* HELMER'S *door and peeps in.*] Torvald!

HELMER.

Well, may one come into one's own room again at last? Come, Rank, we'll have a look—— [*In the doorway.*] But how's this?

NORA.

What, Torvald dear?

HELMER.

Rank led me to expect a grand transformation.

RANK.

[*In the doorway.*] So I understood. I suppose I was mistaken.

NORA.

No, no one shall see me in my glory till to-morrow evening.

HELMER.

Why, Nora dear, you look so tired. Have you been practising too hard?

NORA.

No, I haven't practised at all yet.

HELMER.

But you'll have to——

NORA.

Oh yes, I must, I must! But, Torvald, I can't get on at all without your help. I've forgotten everything.

HELMER.

Oh, we shall soon freshen it up again.

NORA.

Yes, do help me, Torvald. You must promise me—— Oh, I'm so nervous about it. Before so many people—— This evening you must give yourself up entirely to me. You mustn't do a stroke of work; you musn't even touch a pen. Do promise, Torvald dear!

HELMER.

I promise. All this evening I shall be your slave. Little helpless thing——! But, by-the-bye, I must just—— [*Going to hall door.*

NORA.

What do you want there?

HELMER.

Only to see if there are any letters.

NORA.

No, no, don't do that, Torvald.

HELMER.

Why not?

NORA.

Torvald, I beg you not to. There are none there.

HELMER.

Let me just see. [*Is going.*

[NORA, *at the piano, plays the first bars of the tarantella.*

HELMER.

[*At the door, stops.*] Aha!

NORA.

I can't dance to-morrow if I don't rehearse with you first.

HELMER.

[*Going to her.*] Are you really so nervous, dear Nora?

NORA.

Yes, dreadfully! Let me rehearse at once. We have time before dinner. Oh, do sit down and play for me, Torvald dear; direct me and put me right, as you used to do.

HELMER.

With all the pleasure in life, since you wish it. [*Sits at piano.*

[NORA *snatches the tambourine out of the box, and hurriedly drapes herself in a long parti-coloured shawl; then, with a bound, stands in the middle of the floor.*

NORA.

Now play for me! Now I'll dance!

[HELMER *plays and* NORA *dances.* RANK *stands at the piano behind* HELMER *and looks on.*

HELMER.

[*Playing.*] Slower! Slower!

NORA.

Can't do it slower!

HELMER.

Not so violently, Nora.

NORA.

I must! I must!

HELMER.

[*Stops.*] No, no, Nora—that will never do.

NORA.

[*Laughs and swings her tambourine.*] Didn't I tell you so!

RANK.

Let me play for her.

HELMER.

[*Rising.*] Yes, do—then I can direct her better.

[RANK *sits down to the piano and plays;* NORA *dances more and more wildly.* HELMER *stands by the stove and addresses frequent corrections to her; she seems not to hear. Her hair breaks loose, and falls over her shoulders. She does not notice it, but goes on dancing.* MRS. LINDEN *enters and stands spellbound in the doorway.*

MRS. LINDEN.

Ah——!

NORA.

[*Dancing.*] We're having such fun here Christina!

HELMER.

Why, Nora dear, you're dancing as if it were a matter of life and death.

NORA.

So it is.

HELMER.

Rank, stop! This is the merest madness. Stop, I say!

[RANK *stops playing, and* NORA *comes to a sudden standstill.*

HELMER.

[*Going towards her.*] I couldn't have believed it. You've positively forgotten all I taught you.

NORA.

[*Throws the tambourine away.*] You see for yourself.

HELMER.

You really do want teaching.

NORA.

Yes, you see how much I need it. You must practise with me up to the last moment. Will you promise me, Torvald?

HELMER.

Certainly, certainly.

NORA.

Neither to-day nor to morrow must you think of anything but me. You mustn't open a single letter—mustn't look at the letter-box

HELMER.

Ah, you're still afraid of that man——

NORA.

Oh yes, yes, I am.

HELMER.

Nora, I can see it in your face—there's a letter from him in the box.

NORA.

I don't know, I believe so. But you're not to read anything now; nothing ugly must come between us until all is over.

RANK.

[*Softly, to* HELMER.] You mustn't contradict her.

HELMER.

[*Putting his arm around her.*] The child shall have her own way. But to-morrow night, when the dance is over ——

NORA.

Then you shall be free.

ELLEN *appears in the doorway, right.*

ELLEN.

Dinner is on the table, ma'am.

NORA.

We'll have some champagne, Ellen.

ELLEN.

Yes, ma'am. [*Goes out.*

HELMER.

Dear me! Quite a banquet.

NORA.

Yes, and we'll keep it up till morning. [*Calling out.*] And macaroons, Ellen—plenty—just this once.

HELMER.

[*Seizing her hand.*] Come, come, don't let us have this wild excitement! Be my own little lark again.

NORA.

Oh yes, I will. But now go into the dining-room; and you too, Doctor Rank. Christina, you must help me to do up my hair.

RANK.

[*Softly, as they go.*] There's nothing in the wind? Nothing—I mean——?

HELMER.

Oh no, nothing of the kind. It's merely this babyish anxiety I was telling you about.

[*They go out to the right.*

NORA.

Well?

MRS. LINDEN.

He's gone out of town.

NORA.

I saw it in your face.

MRS. LINDEN.

He comes back to morrow evening. I left a note for him.

NORA.

You shouldn't have done that. Things must

take their course. After all, there's something glorious in waiting for the miracle.

MRS. LINDEN.

What is it you're waiting for?

NORA.

Oh, you can't understand. Go to them in the dining-room; I shall come in a moment.

[MRS. LINDEN *goes into the dining-room.* NORA *stands for a moment as though collecting her thoughts; then looks at her watch.*

NORA.

Five. Seven hours till midnight. Then twenty-four hours till the next midnight. Then the tarantella will be over. Twenty-four and seven? Thirty-one hours to live.

HELMER *appears at the door, right.*

HELMER.

What has become of my little lark?

NORA.

[*Runs to him with open arms.*] Here she is!

ACT THIRD

The same room. The table, with the chairs around it, in the middle. A lighted lamp on the table. The door to the hall stands open. Dance music is heard from the floor above.

MRS. LINDEN *sits by the table and absently turns the pages of a book. She tries to read, but seems unable to fix her attention; she frequently listens and looks anxiously towards the hall door.*

MRS. LINDEN.

[*Looks at her watch.*] Not here yet; and the time is nearly up. If only he hasn't—— [*Listens again.*] Ah, there he is. [*She goes into the hall and cautiously opens the outer door; soft footsteps are heard on the stairs; she whispers.*] Come in; there is no one here.

KROGSTAD.

[*In the doorway.*] I found a note from you at my house. What does it mean?

MRS. LINDEN.

I must speak to you.

KROGSTAD.

Indeed? And in this house?

MRS. LINDEN.

I could not see you at my rooms. They have no separate entrance. Come in; we are quite alone. The servants are asleep, and the Helmers are at the ball upstairs.

KROGSTAD.

[*Coming into the room.*] Ah! So the Helmers are dancing this evening? Really?

MRS. LINDEN.

Yes. Why not?

KROGSTAD.

Quite right. Why not?

MRS. LINDEN.

And now let us talk a little.

KROGSTAD.

Have we two anything to say to each other?

MRS. LINDEN.

A great deal.

KROGSTAD.

I should not have thought so.

MRS. LINDEN.

Because you have never really understood me.

KROGSTAD.

What was there to understand? The most natural thing in the world—a heartless woman throws a man over when a better match offers.

MRS. LINDEN.

Do you really think me so heartless? Do you think I broke with you lightly?

KROGSTAD.

Did you not?

MRS. LINDEN.

Do you really think so?

KROGSTAD.

If not, why did you write me that letter?

MRS. LINDEN.

Was it not best? Since I had to break with you, was it not right that I should try to put an end to all that you felt for me?

KROGSTAD.

[*Clenching his hands together.*] So that was it? And all this—for the sake of money!

MRS. LINDEN.

You ought not to forget that I had a helpless mother and two little brothers. We could not wait for you, Nils, as your prospects then stood.

KROGSTAD.

Perhaps not; but you had no right to cast me off for the sake of others, whoever the others might be.

MRS. LINDEN.

I don't know. I have often asked myself whether I had the right.

KROGSTAD.

[*More softly.*] When I had lost you, I seemed

to have no firm ground left under my feet. Look at me now. I am a shipwrecked man clinging to a spar.

MRS. LINDEN.

Rescue may be at hand.

KROGSTAD.

It was at hand; but then you came and stood in the way.

MRS. LINDEN.

Without my knowledge, Nils. I did not know till to-day that it was you I was to replace in the Bank.

KROGSTAD.

Well, I take your word for it. But now that you do know, do you mean to give way?

MRS. LINDEN.

No, for that would not help you in the least.

KROGSTAD.

Oh, help, help——! I should do it whether or no.

MRS. LINDEN.

I have learnt prudence. Life and bitter necessity have schooled me.

KROGSTAD.

And life has taught me not to trust fine speeches.

MRS. LINDEN.

Then life has taught you a very sensible thing. But deeds you will trust?

KROGSTAD.

What do you mean?

MRS. LINDEN.

You said you were a shipwrecked man, clinging to a spar.

KROGSTAD.

I have good reason to say so.

MRS. LINDEN.

I too am shipwrecked, and clinging to a spar. I have no one to mourn for, no one to care for.

KROGSTAD.

You made your own choice.

MRS. LINDEN.

No choice was left me.

KROGSTAD.

Well, what then?

MRS. LINDEN.

Nils, how if we two shipwrecked people could join hands?

KROGSTAD.

What!

MRS. LINDEN.

Two on a raft have a better chance than if each clings to a separate spar.

KROGSTAD.

Christina!

MRS. LINDEN.

What do you think brought me to town?

KROGSTAD.

Had you any thought of me?

MRS. LINDEN.

I must have work or I can't bear to live. All my life, as long as I can remember, I have worked; work has been my one great joy. Now I stand quite alone in the world, aimless and forlorn. There is no happiness in working for one's self. Say, give me somebody and something to work for.

KROGSTAD.

I cannot believe in all this. It is simply a woman's romantic craving for self-sacrifice.

MRS. LINDEN.

Have you ever found me romantic?

KROGSTAD.

Would you really ... Tell me, do you know all my past?

MRS. LINDEN.

Yes.

KROGSTAD.

And do you know what people say of me?

MRS. LINDEN.

Did you not say just now that with me you could have been another man?

KROGSTAD.

I am sure of it.

MRS. LINDEN.

Is it too late?

KROGSTAD.

Christina, do you know what you are doing? Yes, you do; I see it in your face. Have you the courage then——?

MRS. LINDEN.

I need some one to be a mother to, and your children need a mother. You need me, and I—I need you. Nils, I believe in your better self. With you I fear nothing.

KROGSTAD.

[*Seizing her hands.*] Thank you—thank you, Christina. Now I shall make others see me as you do.—Ah, I forgot——

MRS. LINDEN.

[*Listening.*] Hush! The tarantella! Go! go!

KROGSTAD.

Why? What is it?

MRS. LINDEN.

Don't you hear the dancing overhead? As soon as that is over they will be here.

KROGSTAD.

Oh yes, I shall go. Nothing will come of this, after all. Of course, you don't know the step I have taken against the Helmers.

MRS. LINDEN.

Yes, Nils, I do know.

KROGSTAD.

And yet you have the courage to——?

MRS. LINDEN.

I know to what lengths despair can drive a man.

KROGSTAD.

Oh, if I could only undo it!

MRS. LINDEN.

You could. Your letter is still in the box.

KROGSTAD.

Are you sure?

MRS. LINDEN.

Yes; but——

KROGSTAD.

[*Looking to her searchingly.*] Is that what it all means? You want to save your friend at any price. Say it out—is that your idea?

MRS. LINDEN.

Nils, a woman who has once sold herself for the sake of others, does not do so again.

KROGSTAD.

I shall demand my letter back again.

MRS. LINDEN.

No, no.

KROGSTAD.

Yes, of course. I shall wait till Helmer comes; I shall tell him to give it back to me—that it's only about my dismissal—that I don't want it read——

MRS. LINDEN.

No, Nils, you must not recall the letter.

KROGSTAD.

But tell me, wasn't that just why you got me to come here?

MRS. LINDEN.

Yes, in my first alarm. But a day has passed since then, and in that day I have seen incredible things in this house. Helmer must know everything; there must be an end to this unhappy secret. These two must come to a full understanding. They must have done with all these shifts and subterfuges.

KROGSTAD.

Very well, if you like to risk it. But one thing I can do, and at once ——

MRS. LINDEN.

[*Listening.*] Make haste! Go, go! The dance is over; we're not safe another moment.

KROGSTAD.

I shall wait for you in the street.

MRS. LINDEN.

Yes, do; you must see me home.

KROGSTAD.

I never was so happy in all my life!

[KROGSTAD *goes out by the outer door. The door between the room and the hall remains open.*

MRS. LINDEN.

[*Arranging the room and getting her outdoor things together.*] What a change! What a change! To have some one to work for, to live for; a home to make happy! Well, it shall not be my fault if I fail.—I wish they would come.—[*Listens.*] Ah, here they are! I must get my things on.

[*Takes bonnet and cloak.* HELMER'S *and* NORA'S *voices are heard outside, a key is turned in the lock, and* HELMER *drags* NORA *almost by force into the hall. She wears the Italian costume with a large black shawl over it. He is in evening dress and wears a black domino, open.*

NORA.

[*Struggling with him in the doorway.*] No, no, no! I won't go in! I want to go upstairs again; I don't want to leave so early!

HELMER.

But, my dearest girl——!

NORA.

Oh, please, please, Torvald, I beseech you—only one hour more!

HELMER.

Not one minute more, Nora dear; you know what we agreed. Come, come in; you're catching cold here.

[*He leads her gently into the room in spite of her resistance.*

MRS. LINDEN.

Good-evening.

NORA.

Christina!

HELMER.

What, Mrs. Linden! You here so late?

MRS. LINDEN.

Yes, I ought to apologise. I did so want to see Nora in her costume.

NORA.

Have you been sitting here waiting for me?

MRS. LINDEN.

Yes; unfortunately I came too late. You had gone upstairs already, and I felt I couldn't go away without seeing you.

HELMER.

[*Taking* NORA's *shawl off.*] Well then, just look at her! I assure you she's worth it. Isn't she lovely, Mrs. Linden?

MRS. LINDEN.

Yes, I must say——

HELMER.

Isn't she exquisite? Every one said so. But she's dreadfully obstinate, dear little creature. What's to be done with her? Just think, I had almost to force her away.

NORA.

Oh, Torvald, you'll be sorry some day that you didn't let me stay, if only for one half-hour more.

HELMER.

There! You hear her, Mrs. Linden? She dances her tarantella with wild applause, and well she deserved it, I must say—though there was, perhaps, a little too much nature in her rendering of the idea—more than was, strictly speaking, artistic. But never mind—the point is, she made a great success, a tremendous success. Was I to let her remain after that—to weaken the impression? Not if I know it. I took my sweet little Capri girl—my capricious little Capri girl, I might say—under my arm; a rapid turn round the room, a curtsey to all sides, and—as they say in novels—the lovely apparition vanished! An exit should always be effective, Mrs. Linden; but I can't get Nora to see it. By Jove! it's warm here. [*Throws his domino on a chair and opens the door to his room.*] What! No light there? Oh, of course. Excuse me—— [*Goes in and lights candles.*

NORA.

[*Whispers breathlessly.*] Well?

MRS. LINDEN.

[*Softly.*] I've spoken to him.

NORA.

And——?

MRS. LINDEN.

Nora—you must tell your husband everything——

NORA.

[*Tonelessly.*] I knew it!

MRS. LINDEN.

You have nothing to fear from Krogstad; but you must speak out.

NORA.

I shall not speak?

MRS. LINDEN.

Then the letter will.

NORA.

Thank you, Christina. Now I know what I have to do. Hush——!

HELMER.

[*Coming back.*] Well, Mrs. Linden, have you admired her?

MRS. LINDEN.

Yes; and now I must say good-night.

HELMER.

What, already? Does this knitting belong to you?

MRS. LINDEN.

[*Takes it.*] Yes, thanks; I was nearly forgetting it.

HELMER.

Then you do knit?

MRS. LINDEN.

Yes.

HELMER.

Do you know, you ought to embroider instead?

MRS. LINDEN.

Indeed! Why?

HELMER.

Because it's so much prettier. Look now! You

hold the embroidery in the left hand, so, and then work the needle with the right hand, in a long, graceful curve—don't you?

MRS. LINDEN.

Yes, I suppose so.

HELMER.

But knitting is always ugly. Just look—your arms close to your sides, and the needles going up and down—there's something Chinese about it—They really gave us splendid champagne to-night.

MRS. LINDEN.

Well, good-night, Nora, and don't be obstinate any more.

HELMER.

Well said, Mrs. Linden!

MRS. LINDEN.

Good-night, Mr. Helmer.

HELMER.

[*Accompanying her to the door.*] Good-night, good-night; I hope you'll get safely home. I should be glad to—but you have such a short way to go. Good-night, good-night. [*She goes;* HELMER *shuts the door after her and comes forward again.*] At last we've got rid of her: she's a terrible bore.

NORA.

Aren't you very tired, Torvald?

HELMER.

No, not in the least.

NORA.

Nor sleepy?

HELMER.

Not a bit. I feel particularly lively. But you? You do look tired and sleepy.

NORA.

Yes, very tired. I shall soon sleep now.

HELMER.

There, you see. I was right after all not to let you stay longer.

NORA.

Oh, everything you do is right.

HELMER.

[*Kissing her forehead.*] Now my lark is speaking like a reasonable being. Did you notice how jolly Rank was this evening?

NORA.

Indeed? Was he? I had no chance of speaking to him.

HELMER.

Nor I, much; but I haven't seen him in such good spirits for a long time. [*Looks at* NORA *a little, then comes nearer her.*] It's splendid to be back in our own home, to be quite alone together! —Oh, you enchanting creature!

NORA.

Don't look at me in that way, Torvald.

HELMER.

I am not to look at my dearest treasure?—at all

the loveliness that is mine, mine only, wholly and entirely mine?

NORA.

[*Goes to the other side of the table.*] You mustn't say these things to me this evening.

HELMER.

[*Following.*] I see you have the tarantella still in your blood—and that makes you all the more enticing. Listen! the other people are going now. [*More softly.*] Nora—soon the whole house will be still.

NORA.

Yes, I hope so.

HELMER.

Yes, don't you, Nora darling? When we are among strangers, do you know why I speak so little to you, and keep so far away, and only steal a glance at you now and then—do you know why I do it? Because I am fancying that we love each other in secret, that I am secretly betrothed to you, and that no one dreams that there is anything between us.

NORA.

Yes, yes, yes. I know all your thoughts are with me.

HELMER.

And then, when the time comes to go, and I put the shawl about your smooth, soft shoulders, and this glorious neck of yours, I imagine you are my bride, that our marriage is just over, that I am bringing you for the first time to my home—that I am alone with you for the first time—quite alone with you, in your trembling loveliness! All this

evening I have been longing for you, and you only. When I watched you swaying and whirling in the tarantella—my blood boiled—I could endure it no longer; and that's why I made you come home with me so early ——

NORA.

Go now, Torvald! Go away from me. I won't have all this.

HELMER.

What do you mean? Ah, I see you're teasing me, little Nora! Won't—won't! Am I not your husband——? [*A knock at the outer door.*

NORA.

[*Starts.*] Did you hear——?

HELMER.

[*Going towards the hall.*] Who's there?

RANK

[*Outside.*] It is I; may I come in for a moment?

HELMER.

[*In a low tone, annoyed.*] Oh! what can he want just now? [*Aloud.*] Wait a moment. [*Opens door.*] Come, it's nice of you to look in.

RANK.

I thought I heard your voice, and that put it into my head. [*Looks round.*] Ah, this dear old place! How cosy you two are here!

HELMER.

You seemed to find it pleasant enough upstairs, too.

RANK.

Exceedingly. Why not? Why shouldn't one take one's share of everything in this world? All one can, at least, and as long as one can. The wine was splendid——

HELMER.

Especially the champagne.

RANK.

Did you notice it? It's incredible the quantity I contrived to get down.

NORA.

Torvald drank plenty of champagne, too.

RANK.

Did he?

NORA.

Yes, and it always puts him in such spirits.

RANK.

Well, why shouldn't one have a jolly evening after a well-spent day?

HELMER.

Well-spent! Well, I haven't much to boast of in that respect.

RANK.

[*Slapping him on the shoulder.*] But I have, don't you see?

NORA.

I suppose you have been engaged in a scientific investigation, Doctor Rank?

RANK.

Quite right.

HELMER.

Bless me! Little Nora talking about scientific investigations!

NORA.

Am I to congratulate you on the result?

RANK.

By all means.

NORA.

It was good then?

RANK.

The best possible, both for doctor and patient—certainty.

NORA.

[*Quickly and searchingly.*] Certainty?

RANK.

Absolute certainty. Wasn't I right to enjoy myself after that?

NORA.

Yes, quite right, Doctor Rank.

HELMER.

And so say I, provided you don't have to pay for it to-morrow.

RANK.

Well, in this life nothing is to be had for nothing.

NORA.

Doctor Rank—I'm sure you are very fond of masquerades?

RANK.

Yes, when there are plenty of amusing disguises——

NORA.

Tell me, what shall we two be at our next masquerade?

HELMER.

Little featherbrain! Thinking of your next already!

RANK.

We two? I'll tell you. You must go as a good fairy.

HELMER.

Ah, but what costume would indicate that?

RANK.

She has simply to wear her everyday dress.

HELMER.

Capital! But don't you know what you will be yourself?

RANK.

Yes, my dear friend, I am perfectly clear upon that point.

HELMER.

Well?

RANK.

At the next masquerade I shall be invisible.

HELMER.

What a comical idea!

RANK.

There's a big black hat—haven't you heard of

the invisible hat? It comes down all over you, and then no one can see you.

HELMER.

[*With a suppressed smile.*] No, you're right there.

RANK.

But I'm quite forgetting what I came for. Helmer, give me a cigar—one of the dark Havanas.

HELMER.

With the greatest pleasure. [*Hands cigar-case.*

RANK.

[*Takes one and cuts the end off.*] Thank you.

NORA.

[*Striking a wax match.*] Let me give you a light.

RANK.

A thousand thanks.

[*She holds the match. He lights his cigar at it.*

RANK.

And now, good-bye!

HELMER.

Good-bye, good-bye, my dear fellow

NORA.

Sleep well, Doctor Rank.

RANK.

Thanks for the wish.

NORA.

Wish me the same.

RANK.

You? Very well, since you ask me—Sleep well. And thanks for the light.

[*He nods to them both and goes out.*

HELMER.

[*In an undertone.*] He's been drinking a good deal.

NORA.

[*Absently.*] I daresay. [HELMER *takes his bunch of keys from his pocket and goes into the hall.*] Torvald, what are you doing there?

HELMER.

I must empty the letter-box; it's quite full; there will be no room for the newspapers to-morrow morning.

NORA.

Are you going to work to-night?

HELMER.

You know very well I am not.—Why, how is this? Some one has been at the lock.

NORA.

The lock——?

HELMER.

I'm sure of it. What does it mean? I can't think that the servants——? Here's a broken hair-pin. Nora, it's one of yours.

NORA.

[*Quickly.*] It must have been the children——

HELMER.

Then you must break them of such tricks. There! At last I've got it open. [*Takes contents out and calls into the kitchen.*] Ellen!—Ellen, just put the hall door lamp out.

[*He returns with letters in his hand, and shuts the inner door.*

HELMER.

Just see how they've accumulated. [*Turning them over.*] Why, what's this?

NORA.

[*At the window.*] The letter! Oh no, no, Torvald!

HELMER.

Two visiting-cards—from Rank.

NORA.

From Doctor Rank?

HELMER.

[*Looking at them.*] Doctor Rank. They were on the top. He must just have put them in.

NORA.

Is there anything on them?

HELMER.

There's a black cross over the name. Look at it. What an unpleasant idea! It looks just as if he were announcing his own death.

NORA.

So he is.

HELMER.

What! Do you know anything? Has he told you anything?

NORA.

Yes. These cards mean that he has taken his last leave of us. He is going to shut himself up and die.

HELMER.

Poor fellow! Of course I knew we couldn't hope to keep him long. But so soon——! And to go and creep into his lair like a wounded animal——

NORA.

When we must go, it is best to go silently Don't you think so, Torvald?

HELMER.

[*Walking up and down.*] He had so grown into our lives, I can't realise that he is gone. He and his sufferings and his loneliness formed a sort of cloudy background to the sunshine of our happiness.—Well, perhaps it's best as it is—at any rate for him. [*Stands still.*] And perhaps for us too, Nora. Now we two are thrown entirely upon each other. [*Takes her in his arms.*] My darling wife! I feel as if I could never hold you close enough. Do you know, Nora, I often wish some danger might threaten you, that I might risk body and soul, and everything, everything, for your dear sake.

NORA.

[*Tears herself from him and says firmly.*] Now you shall read your letters, Torvald.

HELMER.

No, no; not to-night. I want to be with you, my sweet wife.

NORA.

With the thought of your dying friend——?

HELMER.

You are right. This has shaken us both. Unloveliness has come between us—thoughts ot death and decay. We must seek to cast them off. Till then—we will remain apart.

NORA.

[*Her arms round his neck.*] Torvald! Good-night! good-night!

HELMER.

[*Kissing her forehead.*] Good-night, my little song-bird. Sleep well, Nora. Now I shall go and read my letters.

[*He goes with the letters in his hand into his room and shuts the door.*

NORA.

[*With wild eyes, gropes about her, seizes* HELMER'S *domino, throws it round her, and whispers quickly, hoarsely, and brokenly.*] Never to see him again. Never, never, never. [*Throws her shawl over her head.*] Never to see the children again. Never, never.—Oh that black, icy water! Oh that bottomless——! If it were only over! Now he has it; he's reading it. Oh, no, no, no, not yet. Torvald, good-bye——! Good-bye, my little ones——!

[*She is rushing out by the hall; at the same moment* HELMER *flings his door open, and stands there with an open letter in his hand.*

HELMER.

Nora!

NORA.

[*Shrieks.*] Ah——!

HELMER.

What is this? Do you know what is in this letter?

NORA.

Yes, I know. Let me go! Let me pass!

HELMER.

[*Holds her back.*] Where do you want to go?

NORA.

[*Tries to break away from him.*] You shall not save me, Torvald.

HELMER.

[*Falling back.*] True! Is what he writes true? No, no, it is impossible that this can be true.

NORA.

It is true. I have loved you beyond all else in the world.

HELMER.

Pshaw—no silly evasions!

NORA.

[*A step nearer him.*] Torvald——!

HELMER.

Wrétched woman—what have you done!

NORA.

Let me go—you shall not save me! You shall not take my guilt upon yourself!

HELMER.

I don't want any melodramatic airs. [*Locks the outer door.*] Here you shall stay and give an account of yourself. Do you understand what you have done? Answer! Do you understand it?

NORA.

[*Looks at him fixedly, and says with a stiffening expression.*] Yes; now I begin fully to understand it.

HELMER.

[*Walking up and down.*] Oh! what an awful awakening! During all these eight years—she who was my pride and my joy—a hypocrite, a liar—worse, worse—a criminal. Oh, the unfathomable hideousness of it all! Ugh! Ugh!

[NORA *says nothing, and continues to look fixedly at him.*

HELMER.

I ought to have known how it would be. I ought to have foreseen it. All your father's want of principle—be silent! all your father's want of principle you have inherited—no religion, no morality, no sense of duty. How I am punished for screening him! I did it for your sake; and you reward me like this.

NORA.

Yes—like this.

HELMER.

You have destroyed my whole happiness. You have ruined my future. Oh, it's frightful to think of! I am in the power of a scoundrel; he can do whatever he pleases with me, demand whatever

he chooses; he can domineer over me as much as he likes, and I must submit. And all this disaster and ruin is brought upon me by an unprincipled woman!

NORA.

When I am out of the world, you will be free.

HELMER.

Oh, no fine phrases. Your father, too, was always ready with them. What good would it do me, if you were "out of the world," as you say? No good whatever! He can publish the story all the same; I might even be suspected of collusion. People will think I was at the bottom of it all and egged you on. And for all this I have you to thank—you whom I have done nothing but pet and spoil during our whole married life. Do you understand now what you have done to me?

NORA.

[*With cold calmness.*] Yes.

HELMER.

The thing is so incredible, I can't grasp it. But we must come to an understanding. Take that shawl off. Take it off, I say! I must try to pacify him in one way or another—the matter must be hushed up, cost what it may.—As for you and me, we must make no outward change in our way of life—no outward change, you understand. Of course, you will continue to live here. But the children cannot be left in your care. I dare not trust them to you.—Oh, to have to say this to one I have loved so tenderly—whom I still——! But that must be a thing of the past.

Henceforward there can be no question of happiness, but merely of saving the ruins, the shreds, the show—— [*A ring;* HELMER *starts.*] What's that? So late! Can it be the worst? Can he——? Hide yourself, Nora; say you are ill.

[NORA *stands motionless.* HELMER *goes to the door and opens it.*

ELLEN.

[*Half dressed, in the hall.*] Here is a letter for you, ma'am.

HELMER.

Give it to me. [*Seizes the letter and shuts the door.*] Yes, from him. You shall not have it. I shall read it.

NORA.

Read it!

HELMER.

[*By the lamp.*] I have hardly the courage to. We may both be lost, both you and I. Ah! I must know. [*Hastily tears the letter open; reads a few lines, looks at an enclosure; with a cry of joy.*] Nora! [NORA *looks inquiringly at him.*

HELMER.

Nora!—Oh! I must read it again.—Yes, yes, it is so. I am saved! Nora, I am saved!

NORA.

And I?

HELMER.

You too, of course; we are both saved, both of us. Look here—he sends you back your promissory note. He writes that he regrets and apologises

that a happy turn in his life—— Oh, what matter what he writes. We are saved, Nora! No one can harm you. Oh, Nora, Nora—— ; but first to get rid of this hateful thing. I'll just see—— [*Glances at the I.O.U.*] No, I will not look at it ; the whole thing shall be nothing but a dream to me. [*Tears the I.O.U. and both letters in pieces. Throws them into the fire and watches them burn.*] There ! it's gone !—He said that ever since Christmas Eve—— Oh, Nora, they must have been three terrible days for you !

NORA.

I have fought a hard fight for the last three days.

HELMER.

And in your agony you saw no other outlet but—— No ; we won't think of that horror. We will only rejoice and repeat—it's over, all over ! Don't you hear, Nora ? You don't seem able to grasp it. Yes, it's over. What is this set look on your face ? Oh, my poor Nora, I understand ; you cannot believe that I have forgiven you. But I have, Nora ; I swear it. I have forgiven everything. I know that what you did was all for love of me.

NORA.

That is true.

HELMER.

You loved me as a wife should love her husband. It was only the means that, in your inexperience, you misjudged. But do you think I love you the less because you cannot do without guidance ? No, no. Only lean on me ; I will counsel you, and guide you. I should be no true man if this

very womanly helplessness did not make you doubly dear in my eyes. You mustn't dwell upon the hard things I said in my first moment of terror, when the world seemed to be tumbling about my ears. I have forgiven you, Nora—I swear I have forgiven you.

NORA.

I thank you for your forgiveness.

[*Goes out, to the right.*

HELMER.

No, stay——! [*Looking through the doorway.*] What are you going to do?

NORA.

[*Inside.*] To take off my masquerade dress.

HELMER.

[*In the doorway.*] Yes, do, dear. Try to calm down, and recover your balance, my scared little song-bird. You may rest secure. I have broad wings to shield you. [*Walking up and down near the door.*] Oh, how lovely—how cosy our home is, Nora! Here you are safe; here I can shelter you like a hunted dove whom I have saved from the claws of the hawk. I shall soon bring your poor beating heart to rest; believe me, Nora, very soon. To-morrow all this will seem quite different—everything will be as before. I shall not need to tell you again that I forgive you; you will feel for yourself that it is true. How could you think I could find it in my heart to drive you away, or even so much as to reproach you? Oh, you don't know a true man's heart, Nora. There is something indescribably sweet and soothing to a man

in having forgiven his wife—honestly forgiven her, from the bottom of his heart. She becomes his property in a double sense. She is as though born again; she has become, so to speak, at once his wife and his child. That is what you shall henceforth be to me, my bewildered, helpless darling. Don't be troubled about anything, Nora; only open your heart to me, and I will be both will and conscience to you. [NORA *enters in everyday dress.*] Why, what's this? Not gone to bed? You have changed your dress?

NORA.

Yes, Torvald; now I have changed my dress.

HELMER.

But why now, so late——?

NORA.

I shall not sleep to-night.

HELMER.

But, Nora dear——

NORA.

[*Looking at her watch.*] It's not so late yet. Sit down, Torvald; you and I have much to say to each other. [*She sits at one side of the table.*

HELMER.

Nora—what does this mean? Your cold, set face——

NORA.

Sit down. It will take some time. I have much to talk over with you.

[HELMER *sits at the other side of the table.*

HELMER.

You alarm me, Nora. I don't understand you.

NORA.

No, that is just it. You don't understand me; and I have never understood you till to-night. No, don't interrupt. Only listen to what I say.—We must come to a final settlement, Torvald.

HELMER.

How do you mean?

NORA.

[*After a short silence.*] Does not one thing strike you as we sit here?

HELMER.

What should strike me?

NORA.

We have been married eight years. Does it not strike you that this is the first time we two, you and I, man and wife, have talked together seriously?

HELMER.

Seriously! What do you call seriously?

NORA.

During eight whole years, and more—ever since the day we first met—we have never exchanged one serious word about serious things.

HELMER.

Was I always to trouble you with the cares you could not help me to bear?

NORA.

I am not talking of cares. I say that we have never yet set ourselves seriously to get to the bottom of anything.

HELMER.

Why, my dearest Nora, what have you to do with serious things?

NORA.

There we have it! You have never understood me.—I have had great injustice done me, Torvald; first by father, and then by you.

HELMER.

What! By your father and me?—By us, who have loved you more than all the world?

NORA

[*Shaking her head.*] You have never loved me. You only thought it amusing to be in love with me.

HELMER.

Why, Nora, what a thing to say!

NORA.

Yes, it is so, Torvald. While I was at home with father, he used to tell me all his opinions, and I held the same opinions. If I had others I said nothing about them, because he wouldn't have liked it. He used to call me his doll-child, and played with me as I played with my dolls. Then I came to live in your house——

HELMER.

What an expression to use about our marriage!

NORA.

[*Undisturbed.*] I mean I passed from father's hands into yours. You arranged everything according to your taste; and I got the same tastes as you; or I pretended to—I don't know which—both ways, perhaps; sometimes one and sometimes the other. When I look back on it now, I seem to have been living here like a beggar, from hand to mouth. I lived by performing tricks for you, Torvald. But you would have it so. You and father have done me a great wrong. It is your fault that my life has come to nothing.

HELMER.

Why, Nora, how unreasonable and ungrateful you are! Have you not been happy here?

NORA.

No, never. I thought I was; but I never was.

HELMER.

Not—not happy!

NORA.

No; only merry. And you have always been so kind to me. But our house has been nothing but a play-room. Here I have been your doll-wife, just as at home I used to be papa's doll-child. And the children, in their turn, have been my dolls. I thought it fun when you played with me, just as the children did when I played with them. That has been our marriage, Torvald.

HELMER.

There is some truth in what you say, exaggerated

and overstrained though it be. But henceforth it shall be different. Play-time is over; now comes the time for education.

NORA.

Whose education? Mine, or the children's?

HELMER.

Both, my dear Nora.

NORA.

Oh, Torvald, you are not the man to teach me to be a fit wife for you.

HELMER.

And you can say that?

NORA.

And I—how have I prepared myself to educate the children?

HELMER.

Nora!

NORA.

Did you not say yourself, a few minutes ago, you dared not trust them to me?

HELMER.

In the excitement of the moment! Why should you dwell upon that?

NORA.

Nó—you were perfectly right. That problem is beyond me. There is another to be solved first—I must try to educate myself. You are not the man to help me in that. I must set about it alone. And that is why I am leaving you.

HELMER.

[*Jumping up.*] What—do you mean to say——?

NORA.

I must stand quite alone if I am ever to know myself and my surroundings; so I cannot stay with you.

HELMER.

Nora! Nora!

NORA.

I am going at once. I daresay Christina will take me in for to-night——

HELMER.

You are mad! I shall not allow it! I forbid it!

NORA.

It is of no use your forbidding me anything now. I shall take with me what belongs to me. From you I will accept nothing, either now or afterwards.

HELMER.

What madness this is!

NORA.

To-morrow I shall go home—I mean to what was my home. It will be easier for me to find some opening there.

HELMER.

Oh, in your blind inexperience——

NORA.

I must try to gain experience, Torvald.

HELMER.

To forsake your home, your husband, and your children! And you don't consider what the world will say.

NORA.

I can pay no heed to that. I only know that I must do it.

HELMER.

This is monstrous! Can you forsake your holiest duties in this way?

NORA.

What do you consider my holiest duties?

HELMER.

Do I need to tell you that? Your duties to your husband and your children.

NORA.

I have other duties equally sacred.

HELMER.

Impossible! What duties do you mean?

NORA.

My duties towards myself.

HELMER.

Before all else you are a wife and a mother.

NORA.

That I no longer believe. I believe that before all else I am a human being, just as much as you are—or at least that I should try to become one. I know that most people agree with you, Torvald,

and that they say so in books. But henceforth I can't be satisfied with what most people say, and what is in books. I must think things out for myself, and try to get clear about them.

HELMER.

Are you not clear about your place in your own home? Have you not an infallible guide in questions like these? Have you not religion?

NORA.

Oh, Torvald, I don't really know what religion is.

HELMER.

What do you mean?

NORA.

I know nothing but what Pastor Hansen told me when I was confirmed. He explained that religion was this and that. When I get away from all this and stand alone, I will look into that matter too. I will see whether what he taught me is right, or, at any rate, whether it is right for me.

HELMER.

Oh, this is unheard of! And from so young a woman! But if religion cannot keep you right, let me appeal to your conscience—for I suppose you have some moral feeling? Or, answer me: perhaps you have none?

NORA.

Well, Torvald, it's not easy to say. I really don't know—I am all at sea about these things. I only know that I think quite differently from

you about them. I hear, too, that the laws are different from what I thought; but I can't believe that they can be right. It appears that a woman has no right to spare her dying father, or to save her husband's life! I don't believe that.

HELMER.

You talk like a child. You don't understand the society in which you live.

NORA.

No, I do not. But now I shall try to learn. I must make up my mind which is right—society or I.

HELMER.

Nora, you are ill; you are feverish; I almost think you are out of your senses.

NORA.

I have never felt so much clearness and certainty as to-night.

HELMER.

You are clear and certain enough to forsake husband and children?

NORA.

Yes, I am.

HELMER.

Then there is only one explanation possible.

NORA.

What is that?

HELMER.

You no longer love me.

NORA.

No; that is just it.

HELMER.

Nora!—Can you say so!

NORA.

Oh, I'm so sorry, Torvald; for you've always been so kind to me. But I can't help it. I do not love you any longer.

HELMER.

[*Mastering himself with difficulty.*] Are you clear and certain on this point too?

NORA.

Yes, quite. That is why I will not stay here any longer.

HELMER.

And can you also make clear to me how I have forfeited your love?

NORA.

Yes, I can. It was this evening, when the miracle did not happen; for then I saw you were not the man I had imagined.

HELMER.

Explain yourself more clearly; I don't understand.

NORA.

I have waited so patiently all these eight years; for of course I saw clearly enough that miracles don't happen every day. When this crushing blow

threatened me, I said to myself so confidently, "Now comes the miracle!" When Krogstad's letter lay in the box, it never for a moment occurred to me that you would think of submitting to that man's conditions. I was convinced that you would say to him, "Make it known to all the world"; and that then——

HELMER.

Well? When I had given my own wife's name up to disgrace and shame——?

NORA.

Then I firmly believed that you would come forward, take everything upon yourself, and say, "I am the guilty one."

HELMER.

Nora——!

NORA.

You mean I would never have accepted such a sacrifice? No, certainly not. But what would my assertions have been worth in opposition to yours? —That was the miracle that I hoped for and dreaded. And it was to hinder that that I wanted to die.

HELMER.

I would gladly work for you day and night, Nora —bear sorrow and want for your sake. But no man sacrifices his honour, even for one he loves.

NORA.

Millions of women have done so.

HELMER.

Oh, you think and talk like a silly child.

NORA.

Very likely. But you neither think nor talk like the man I can share my life with. When your terror was over—not for what threatened me, but for yourself—when there was nothing more to fear—then it seemed to you as though nothing had happened. I was your lark again, your doll, just as before—whom you would take twice as much care of in future, because she was so weak and fragile. [*Stands up.*] Torvald—in that moment it burst upon me that I had been living here these eight years with a strange man, and had borne him three children.—Oh, I can't bear to think of it! I could tear myself to pieces!

HELMER.

[*Sadly.*] I see it, I see it; an abyss has opened between us.—But, Nora, can it never be filled up?

NORA.

As I now am, I am no wife for you.

HELMER.

I have strength to become another man.

NORA.

Perhaps—when your doll is taken away from you.

HELMER.

To part—to part from you! No, Nora, no; I can't grasp the thought.

NORA.

[*Going into room on the right.*] The more reason for the thing to happen.

[*She comes back with out-door things and a small travelling-bag, which she places on a chair.*

HELMER.

Nora, Nora, not now! Wait till to-morrow.

NORA.

[*Putting on cloak.*] I can't spend the night in a strange man's house.

HELMER.

But can we not live here, as brother and sister——?

NORA.

[*Fastening her hat.*] You know very well that wouldn't last long. [*Puts on the shawl.*] Good-bye, Torvald. No, I won't go to the children. I know they are in better hands than mine. As I now am, I can be nothing to them.

HELMER.

But some time, Nora—some time——?

NORA.

How can I tell? I have no idea what will become of me.

HELMER.

But you are my wife, now and always!

NORA.

Listen, Torvald—when a wife leaves her

husband's house, as I am doing, I have heard that in the eyes of the law he is free from all duties towards her. At any rate, I release you from all duties. You must not feel yourself bound, any more than I shall. There must be perfect freedom on both sides. There, I give you back your ring. Give me mine.

HELMER.

That too?

NORA.

That too.

HELMER.

Here it is.

NORA.

Very well. Now it is all over. I lay the keys here. The servants know about everything in the house—better than I do. To-morrow, when I have started, Christina will come to pack up the things I brought with me from home. I will have them sent after me.

HELMER.

All over! all over! Nora, will you never think of me again?

NORA.

Oh, I shall often think of you, and the children, and this house.

HELMER.

May I write to you, Nora?

NORA.

No—never. You must not.

HELMER.

But I must send you——

NORA.

Nothing, nothing.

HELMER.

I must help you if you need it.

NORA.

No, I say. I take nothing from strangers.

HELMER.

Nora—can I never be more than a stranger to you?

NORA.

[*Taking her travelling-bag.*] Oh, Torvald, then the miracle of miracles would have to happen ——

HELMER.

What is the miracle of miracles?

NORA.

Both of us would have to change so that—— Oh, Torvald, I no longer believe in miracles.

HELMER.

But *I* will believe. Tell me! We must so change that——?

NORA.

That communion between us shall be a marriage. Good-bye. [*She goes out by the hall door.*

HELMER.

[*Sinks into a chair by the door with his face in his hands.*] Nora! Nora! [*He looks round and rises.*] Empty. She is gone. [*A hope springs up in him.*] Ah! The miracle of miracles——?!

[*From below is heard the reverberation of a heavy door closing.*

THE END.

GHOSTS

(1881)

CHARACTERS.

MRS. HELEN ALVING, *widow of Captain Alving, late Chamberlain*[1] *to the King.*

OSWALD ALVING, *her son, a painter.*

PASTOR MANDERS.

JACOB ENGSTRAND, *a carpenter.*

REGINA ENGSTRAND, *Mrs. Alving's maid.*

The action takes place at Mrs. Alving's country house, beside one of the large fjords in Western Norway.

[1] Chamberlain (Kammerherre) is the only title of honour now existing in Norway. It is a distinction conferred by the King on men of wealth and position, and is not hereditary.

GHOSTS:

A FAMILY-DRAMA IN THREE ACTS.

ACT FIRST.

A spacious garden-room, with one door to the left, and two doors to the right. In the middle of the room a round table, with chairs about it. On the table lie books, periodicals, and newspapers. In the foreground to the left a window, and by it a small sofa, with a work-table in front of it. In the background, the room is continued into a somewhat narrower conservatory, the walls of which are formed by large panes of glass. In the right-hand wall of the conservatory is a door leading down into the garden. Through the glass wall a gloomy fjord-landscape is faintly visible, veiled by steady rain.

ENGSTRAND, *the carpenter, stands by the garden door. His left leg is somewhat bent; he has a clump of wood under the sole of his boot.* REGINA, *with an empty garden syringe in her hand, hinders him from advancing.*

REGINA.

[*In a low voice.*] What do you want? Stop where you are. You're positively dripping.

ENGSTRAND.

It's the Lord's own rain, my girl.

REGINA.

It's the devil's rain, *I* say.

ENGSTRAND.

Lord, how you talk, Regina. [*Limps a step or two forward into the room.*] It's just this as I wanted to say——

REGINA.

Don't clatter so with that foot of yours, I tell you! The young master's asleep upstairs.

ENGSTRAND.

Asleep? In the middle of the day?

REGINA.

It's no business of yours.

ENGSTRAND.

I was out on the loose last night——

REGINA.

I can quite believe that.

ENGSTRAND.

Yes, we're weak vessels, we poor mortals, my girl——

REGINA.

So it seems.

ENGSTRAND.

——and temptations are manifold in this world, you see. But all the same, I was hard at work, God knows, at half-past five this morning.

REGINA.

Very well; only be off now. I won't stop here and have *rendezvous's*[1] with you.

ENGSTRAND.

What do you say you won't have?

REGINA.

I won't have any one find you here; so just you go about your business.

ENGSTRAND.

[*Advances a step or two.*] Blest if I go before I've had a talk with you. This afternoon I shall have finished my work at the school-house, and then I shall take to-night's boat and be off home to the town.

REGINA.

[*Mutters.*] Pleasant journey to you!

ENGSTRAND.

Thank you, my child. To-morrow the Orphanage is to be opened, and then there'll be fine doings, no doubt, and plenty of intoxicating drink going, you know. And nobody shall say of Jacob Engstrand that he can't keep out of temptation's way.

REGINA.

Oh!

ENGSTRAND.

You see, there's to be heaps of grand folks here to-morrow. Pastor Manders is expected from town, too.

[1] This and other French words used by Regina are in that language in the original.

REGINA.

He's coming to-day.

ENGSTRAND.

There, you see! And I should be cursedly sorry if he found out anything against me, don't you understand?

REGINA.

Oho! is that your game?

ENGSTRAND.

Is what my game?

REGINA.

[*Looking hard at him.*] What are you going to fool Pastor Manders into doing, this time?

ENGSTRAND.

Sh! sh! Are you crazy? Do *I* want to fool Pastor Manders? Oh no! Pastor Manders has been far too good a friend to me for that. But I just wanted to say, you know—that I mean to be off home again to-night.

REGINA.

The sooner the better, say I.

ENGSTRAND.

Yes, but I want you with me, Regina.

REGINA.

[*Open-mouthed.*] You want me——? What are you talking about?

ENGSTRAND.

I want you to come home with me, I say.

REGINA.

[*Scornfully.*] Never in this world shall you get me home with you.

ENGSTRAND.

Oh, we'll see about that.

REGINA.

Yes, you may be sure we'll see about it! Me, that have been brought up by a lady like Mrs Alving! Me, that am treated almost as a daughter here! Is it me you want to go home with you?—to a house like yours? For shame!

ENGSTRAND.

What the devil do you mean? Do you set yourself up against your father, you hussy?

REGINA.

[*Mutters without looking at him.*] You've said often enough I was no concern of yours.

ENGSTRAND.

Pooh! Why should you bother about that——

REGINA.

Haven't you many a time sworn at me and called me a——? *Fi donc!*

ENGSTRAND.

Curse me, now, if ever I used such an ugly word.

REGINA.

Oh, I remember very well what word you used.

ENGSTRAND.

Well, but that was only when I was a bit on, don't you know? Temptations are manifold in this world, Regina.

REGINA.

Ugh!

ENGSTRAND.

And besides, it was when your mother was that aggravating—I had to find something to twit her with, my child. She was always setting up for a fine lady. [*Mimics.*] "Let me go, Engstrand; let me be. Remember I was three years in Chamberlain Alving's family at Rosenvold." [*Laughs.*] Mercy on us! She could never forget that the Captain was made a Chamberlain while she was in service here.

REGINA.

Poor mother! you very soon tormented her into her grave.

ENGSTRAND.

[*With a twist of his shoulders.*] Oh, of course! I'm to have the blame for everything.

REGINA.

[*Turns away; half aloud.*] Ugh——! And that leg too!

ENGSTRAND.

What do you say, my child?

REGINA.

Pied de mouton.

ENGSTRAND.

Is that English, eh?

REGINA.

Yes.

ENGSTRAND.

Ay, ay; you've picked up some learning out here; and that may come in useful now, Regina.

REGINA.

[*After a short silence.*] What do you want with me in town?

ENGSTRAND.

Can you ask what a father wants with his only child? A'n't I a lonely, forlorn widower?

REGINA.

Oh, don't try on any nonsense like that with me! Why do you want me?

ENGSTRAND.

Well, let me tell you, I've been thinking of setting up in a new line of business.

REGINA.

[*Contemptuously.*] You've tried that often enough, and much good you've done with it.

ENGSTRAND.

Yes, but this time you shall see, Regina! Devil take me——

REGINA.

[*Stamps.*] Stop your swearing!

ENGSTRAND.

Hush, hush; you're right enough there, my girl. What I wanted to say was just this—I've laid by a very tidy pile from this Orphanage job.

REGINA.

Have you? That's a good thing for you.

ENGSTRAND.

What can a man spend his ha'pence on here in this country hole?

REGINA.

Well, what then?

ENGSTRAND.

Why, you see, I thought of putting the money into some paying speculation. I thought of a sort of a sailor's tavern——

REGINA.

Pah!

ENGSTRAND.

A regular high-class affair, of course; not any sort of pig-sty for common sailors. No! damn it! it would be for captains and mates, and—and—regular swells, you know.

REGINA.

And I was to——?

ENGSTRAND.

You were to help, to be sure. Only for the look of the thing, you understand. Devil a bit of hard work shall you have, my girl. You shall do exactly what you like.

REGINA.

Oh, indeed!

ENGSTRAND.

But there must be a petticoat in the house;

that's as clear as daylight. For I want to have it a bit lively-like in the evenings, with singing and dancing, and so on. You must remember they're weary wanderers on the ocean of life. [*Nearer.*] Now don't be a fool and stand in your own light, Regina. What's to become of you out here? Your mistress has given you a lot of learning; but what good is that to you? You're to look after the children at the new Orphanage, I hear. Is that the sort of thing for you, eh? Are you so dead set on wearing your life out for a pack of dirty brats?

REGINA.

No; if things go as I want them to—— Well there's no saying—there's no saying.

ENGSTRAND.

What do you mean by "there's no saying"?

REGINA.

Never you mind.—How much money have you saved?

ENGSTRAND.

What with one thing and another, a matter of seven or eight hundred crowns.[1]

REGINA.

That's not so bad.

ENGSTRAND.

It's enough to make a start with, my girl.

REGINA.

Aren't you thinking of giving me any?

[1] A "krone" is equal to one shilling and three-halfpence.

ENGSTRAND.

No, I'm blest if I am!

REGINA.

Not even of sending me a scrap of stuff for a new dress?

ENGSTRAND.

Come to town with me, my lass, and you'll soon get dresses enough.

REGINA.

Pooh! I can do that on my own account, if I want to.

ENGSTRAND.

No, a father's guiding hand is what you want, Regina. Now, I've got my eye on a capital house in Little Harbour Street. They don't want much ready-money; and it could be a sort of a Sailors' Home, you know.

REGINA.

But I will not live with you! I have nothing whatever to do with you. Be off!

ENGSTRAND.

You wouldn't stop long with me, my girl. No such luck! If you knew how to play your cards, such a fine figure of a girl as you've grown in the last year or two——

REGINA.

Well?

ENGSTRAND.

You'd soon get hold of some mate—or maybe even a captain——

REGINA.

I won't marry any one of that sort. Sailors have no *savoir vivre*.

ENGSTRAND.

What's that they haven't got?

REGINA.

I know what sailors are, I tell you. They're not the sort of people to marry.

ENGSTRAND.

Then never mind about marrying them. You can make it pay all the same. [*More confidentially.*] He—the Englishman—the man with the yacht—he came down with three hundred dollars, he did; and she wasn't a bit handsomer than you.

REGINA.

[*Making for him.*] Out you go!

ENGSTRAND.

[*Falling back.*] Come, come! You're not going to hit me, I hope.

REGINA.

Yes, if you begin talking about mother I shall hit you. Get away with you, I say! [*Drives him back towards the garden door.*] And don't slam the doors. Young Mr. Alving——

ENGSTRAND.

He's asleep; I know. You're mightily taken up about young Mr. Alving—— [*More softly.*] Oho! you don't mean to say it's him as——?

REGINA.

Be off this minute! You're crazy, I tell you!

No, not that way. There comes Pastor Manders. Down the kitchen stairs with you.

ENGSTRAND.

[*Towards the right.*] Yes, yes, I'm going. But just you talk to him as is coming there. He's the man to tell you what a child owes its father. For I am your father all the same, you know. I can prove it from the church register.

[*He goes out through the second door to the right, which* REGINA *has opened, and closes again after him.* REGINA *glances hastily at herself in the mirror, dusts herself with her pocket handkerchief, and settles her necktie; then she busies herself with the flowers.*

PASTOR MANDERS, *wearing an overcoat, carrying an umbrella, and with a small travelling-bag on a strap over his shoulder, comes through the garden door into the conservatory.*

MANDERS.

Good-morning, Miss Engstrand.

REGINA.

[*Turning round, surprised and pleased.*] No, really! Good-morning, Pastor Manders. Is the steamer in already?

MANDERS.

It is just in. [*Enters the sitting-room.*] Terrible weather we have been having lately.

REGINA.

[*Follows him.*] It's such blessëd weather for the country, sir.

MANDERS.

No doubt; you are quite right. We townspeople give too little thought to that.

[*He begins to take off his overcoat.*

REGINA.

Oh, mayn't I help you?—There! Why, how wet it is? I'll just hang it up in the hall. And your umbrella, too—I'll open it and let it dry.

[*She goes out with the things through the second door on the right.* PASTOR MANDERS *takes off his travelling-bag and lays it and his hat on a chair. Meanwhile* REGINA *comes in again.*

MANDERS.

Ah, it's a comfort to get safe under cover. I hope everything is going on well here?

REGINA.

Yes, thank you, sir.

MANDERS.

You have your hands full, I suppose, in preparation for to-morrow?

REGINA.

Yes, there's plenty to do, of course.

MANDERS.

And Mrs. Alving is at home, I trust?

REGINA.

Oh dear, yes. She's just upstairs, looking after the young master's chocolate.

MANDERS.

Yes, by-the-bye—I heard down at the pier that Oswald had arrived.

REGINA.

Yes, he came the day before yesterday. We didn't expect him before to-day.

MANDERS.

Quite strong and well, I hope?

REGINA.

Yes, thank you, quite; but dreadfully tired with the journey. He has made one rush right through from Paris—the whole way in one train, I believe. He's sleeping a little now, I think; so perhaps we'd better talk a little quietly.

MANDERS.

Sh!—as quietly as you please.

REGINA.

[*Arranging an arm-chair beside the table.*] Now, do sit down, Pastor Manders, and make yourself comfortable. [*He sits down; she places a footstool under his feet.*] There! Are you comfortable now, sir?

MANDERS.

Thanks, thanks, extremely so. [*Looks at her.*] Do you know, Miss Engstrand, I positively believe you have grown since I last saw you.

REGINA.

Do you think so, sir? Mrs. Alving says I've filled out too.

MANDERS.

Filled out? Well, perhaps a little; just enough.
[*Short pause.*

REGINA.

Shall I tell Mrs. Alving you are here?

MANDERS.

Thanks, thanks, there is no hurry, my dear child. —By-the-bye, Regina, my good girl, tell me: how is your father getting on out here?

REGINA.

Oh, thank you, sir, he's getting on well enough.

MANDERS.

He called upon me last time he was in town.

REGINA.

Did he, indeed? He's always so glad of a chance of talking to you, sir.

MANDERS.

And you often look in upon him at his work, I daresay?

REGINA.

I? Oh, of course, when I have time, I——

MANDERS.

Your father is not a man of strong character, Miss Engstrand. He stands terribly in need of a guiding hand.

REGINA.

Oh, yes; I daresay he does.

MANDERS.

He requires some one near him whom he cares

for, and whose judgment he respects. He frankly admitted as much when he last came to see me.

REGINA.

Yes, he mentioned something of the sort to me. But I don't know whether Mrs. Alving can spare me; especially now that we've got the new Orphanage to attend to. And then I should be so sorry to leave Mrs. Alving; she has always been so kind to me.

MANDERS.

But a daughter's duty, my good girl—— Of course, we should first have to get your mistress's consent.

REGINA.

But I don't know whether it would be quite proper for me, at my age, to keep house for a single man.

MANDERS.

What! My dear Miss Engstrand! When the man is your own father!

REGINA.

Yes, that may be; but all the same—— Now, if it were in a thoroughly nice house, and with a real gentleman——

MANDERS.

Why, my dear Regina——

REGINA.

——one I could love and respect, and be a daughter to——

MANDERS.

Yes, but my dear, good child——

REGINA.

Then I should be glad to go to town. It's very lonely out here; you know yourself, sir, what it is to be alone in the world. And I can assure you I'm both quick and willing. Don't you know of any such place for me, sir?

MANDERS.

I? No, certainly not.

REGINA.

But, dear, dear sir, do remember me if——

MANDERS.

[*Rising.*] Yes, yes, certainly, Miss Engstrand.

REGINA.

For if I——

MANDERS.

Will you be so good as to tell your mistress I am here?

REGINA.

I will, at once, sir. [*She goes out to the left.*

MANDERS.

[*Paces the room two or three times, stands a moment in the background with his hands behind his back, and looks out over the garden. Then he returns to the table, takes up a book, and looks at the title-page; starts, and looks at several books.*] Ha—indeed!

MRS. ALVING *enters by the door on the left; she is followed by* REGINA, *who immediately goes out by the first door on the right.*

MRS. ALVING.

[*Holds out her hand.*] Welcome, my dear Pastor.

MANDERS.

How do you do, Mrs. Alving? Here I am as I promised.

MRS. ALVING.

Always punctual to the minute.

MANDERS.

You may believe it was not so easy for me to get away. With all the Boards and Committees I belong to——

MRS. ALVING.

That makes it all the kinder of you to come so early. Now we can get through our business before dinner. But where is your portmanteau?

MANDERS.

[*Quickly.*] I left it down at the inn. I shall sleep there to-night.

MRS. ALVING.

[*Suppressing a smile.*] Are you really not to be persuaded, even now, to pass the night under my roof?

MANDERS.

No, no, Mrs. Alving; many thanks. I shall stay at the inn, as usual. It is so conveniently near the landing-stage.

MRS. ALVING.

Well, you must have your own way. But I really should have thought we two old people——

MANDERS.

Now you are making fun of me. Ah, you're naturally in great spirits to-day — what with to-morrow's festival and Oswald's return.

MRS. ALVING.

Yes; you can think what a delight it is to me! It's more than two years since he was home last. And now he has promised to stay with me all the winter.

MANDERS.

Has he really? That is very nice and dutiful of him. For I can well believe that life in Rome and Paris has very different attractions from any we can offer here.

MRS. ALVING.

Ah, but here he has his mother, you see. My own darling boy—he hasn't forgotten his old mother!

MANDERS.

It would be grievous indeed, if absence and absorption in art and that sort of thing were to blunt his natural feelings.

MRS. ALVING.

Yes, you may well say so. But there's nothing of that sort to fear with him. I'm quite curious to see whether you know him again. He'll be down presently; he's upstairs just now, resting a little on the sofa. But do sit down, my dear Pastor.

MANDERS.

Thank you. Are you quite at liberty——?

MRS. ALVING.

Certainly. [*She sits by the table.*

MANDERS.

Very well. Then let me show you—— [*He goes to the chair where his travelling-bag lies, takes out a packet of papers, sits down on the opposite side of the table, and tries to find a clear space for the papers.*] Now, to begin with, here is—— [*Breaking off.*] Tell me, Mrs. Alving, how do these books come to be here?

MRS. ALVING.

These books? They are books I am reading.

MANDERS.

Do you read this sort of literature?

MRS. ALVING.

Certainly I do.

MANDERS.

Do you feel better or happier for such reading?

MRS. ALVING.

I feel, so to speak, more secure.

MANDERS.

That is strange. How do you mean?

MRS. ALVING.

Well, I seem to find explanation and confirmation of all sorts of things I myself have been thinking. For that is the wonderful part of it, Pastor Manders—there is really nothing new in these books, nothing but what most people think

and believe. Only most people either don't formulate it to themselves, or else keep quiet about it.

MANDERS.

Great heavens! Do you really believe that most people——?

MRS. ALVING.

I do, indeed.

MANDERS.

But surely not in this country? Not here among us?

MRS. ALVING.

Yes, certainly; here as elsewhere.

MANDERS.

Well, I really must say——!

MRS. ALVING.

For the rest, what do you object to in these books?

MANDERS.

Object to in them? You surely do not suppose that I have nothing better to do than to study such publications as these?

MRS. ALVING.

That is to say, you know nothing of what you are condemning?

MANDERS.

I have read enough about these writings to disapprove of them.

MRS. ALVING.

Yes; but your own judgment——

MANDERS.

My dear Mrs. Alving, there are many occasions in life when one must rely upon others. Things are so ordered in this world; and it is well that they are. Otherwise, what would become of society?

MRS. ALVING.

Well, well, I daresay you're right there.

MANDERS.

Besides, I of course do not deny that there may be much that is attractive in such books. Nor can I blame you for wishing to keep up with the intellectual movements that are said to be going on in the great world—where you have let your son pass so much of his life. But——

MRS. ALVING.

But?

MANDERS.

[*Lowering his voice.*] But one should not talk about it, Mrs. Alving. One is certainly not bound to account to everybody for what one reads and thinks within one's own four walls.

MRS. ALVING.

Of course not; I quite agree with you.

MANDERS.

Only think, now, how you are bound to consider the interests of this Orphanage, which you decided on founding at a time when—if I understand you rightly—you thought very differently on spiritual matters.

MRS. ALVING.

Oh, yes; I quite admit that. But it was about the Orphanage——

MANDERS.

It was about the Orphanage we were to speak; yes. All I say is: prudence, my dear lady! And now let us get to business. [*Opens the packet, and takes out a number of papers.*] Do you see these?

MRS. ALVING.

The documents?

MANDERS.

All—and in perfect order. I can tell you it was hard work to get them in time. I had to put on strong pressure. The authorities are almost morbidly scrupulous when there is any decisive step to be taken. But here they are at last. [*Looks through the bundle.*] See! here is the formal deed of gift of the parcel of ground known as Solvik in the Manor of Rosenvold, with all the newly constructed buildings, schoolrooms, master's house, and chapel. And here is the legal fiat for the endowment and for the Bye-laws of the Institution. Will you look at them? [*Reads.*] "Bye-laws for the Children's Home to be known as 'Captain Alving's Foundation.'"

MRS. ALVING.

[*Looks long at the paper.*] So there it is.

MANDERS.

I have chosen the designation "Captain" rather than "Chamberlain." "Captain" looks less pretentious.

MRS. ALVING.

Oh, yes; just as you think best.

MANDERS.

And here you have the Bank Account of the capital lying at interest to cover the current expenses of the Orphanage.

MRS. ALVING.

Thank you; but please keep it—it will be more convenient.

MANDERS.

With pleasure. I think we will leave the money in the Bank for the present. The interest is certainly not what we could wish—four per cent. and six months' notice of withdrawal. If a good mortgage could be found later on—of course it must be a first mortgage and an unimpeachable security—then we could consider the matter.

MRS. ALVING.

Certainly, my dear Pastor Manders. You are the best judge in these things.

MANDERS.

I will keep my eyes open at any rate.—But now there is one thing more which I have several times been intending to ask you.

MRS. ALVING.

And what is that?

MANDERS.

Shall the Orphanage buildings be insured or not?

MRS. ALVING.

Of course they must be insured.

MANDERS.

Well, wait a moment, Mrs. Alving. Let us look into the matter a little more closely.

MRS. ALVING.

I have everything insured; buildings and movables and stock and crops.

MANDERS.

Of course you have—on your own estate. And so have I—of course. But here, you see, it is quite another matter. The Orphanage is to be consecrated, as it were, to a higher purpose.

MRS. ALVING.

Yes, but that's no reason——

MANDERS.

For my own part, I should certainly not see the smallest impropriety in guarding against all contingencies——

MRS. ALVING.

No, I should think not.

MANDERS.

But what is the general feeling in the neighbourhood? You, of course, know better than I.

MRS. ALVING.

Well—the general feeling——

MANDERS.

Is there any considerable number of people

—really responsible people—who might be scandalised?

MRS. ALVING.

What do you mean by "really responsible people"?

MANDERS.

Well, I mean people in such independent and influential positions that one cannot help attaching some weight to their opinions.

MRS. ALVING.

There are several people of that sort here, who would very likely be shocked if——

MANDERS.

There, you see! In town we have many such people. Think of all my colleague's adherents! People would be only too ready to interpret our action as a sign that neither you nor I had the right faith in a Higher Providence.

MRS. ALVING.

But for your own part, my dear Pastor, you can at least tell yourself that——

MANDERS.

Yes, I know—I know; my conscience would be quite easy, that is true enough. But nevertheless we should not escape grave misinterpretation; and that might very likely react unfavourably upon the Orphanage.

MRS. ALVING.

Well, in that case——

MANDERS.

Nor can I entirely lose sight of the difficult—I may even say painful—position in which *I* might perhaps be placed. In the leading circles of the town, people take a lively interest in this Orphanage. It is, of course, founded partly for the benefit of the town, as well; and it is to be hoped it will, to a considerable extent, result in lightening our Poor Rates. Now, as I have been your adviser, and have had the business arrangements in my hands, I cannot but fear that I may have to bear the brunt of fanaticism——

MRS. ALVING.

Oh, you mustn't run the risk of that.

MANDERS.

To say nothing of the attacks that would assuredly be made upon me in certain papers and periodicals, which——

MRS. ALVING.

Enough, my dear Pastor Manders. That consideration is quite decisive.

MANDERS.

Then you do not wish the Orphanage to be insured?

MRS. ALVING.

No. We will let it alone.

MANDERS.

[*Leaning back in his chair.*] But if, now, a disaster were to happen? One can never tell—— Should you be able to make good the damage?

MRS. ALVING.

No; I tell you plainly I should do nothing of the kind.

MANDERS.

Then I must tell you, Mrs. Alving—we are taking no small responsibility upon ourselves.

MRS. ALVING.

Do you think we can do otherwise?

MANDERS.

No, that is just the point; we really cannot do otherwise. We ought not to expose ourselves to misinterpretation; and we have no right whatever to give offence to the weaker brethren.

MRS. ALVING.

You, as a clergyman, certainly should not.

MANDERS.

I really think, too, we may trust that such an institution has fortune on its side; in fact, that it stands under a special providence.

MRS. ALVING.

Let us hope so, Pastor Manders.

MANDERS.

Then we will let it take its chance?

MRS. ALVING.

Yes, certainly.

MANDERS.

Very well. So be it. [*Makes a note.*] Then—no insurance.

MRS. ALVING.

It's odd that you should just happen to mention the matter to-day— –

MANDERS.

I have often thought of asking you about it——

MRS. ALVING.

——for we very nearly had a fire down there yesterday.

MANDERS.

You don't say so!

MRS. ALVING.

Oh, it was a trifling matter. A heap of shavings had caught fire in the carpenter's workshop.

MANDERS.

Where Engstrand works?

MRS. ALVING.

Yes. They say he's often very careless with matches.

MANDERS.

He has so much on his mind, that man—so many things to fight against. Thank God, he is now striving to lead a decent life, I hear.

MRS. ALVING.

Indeed! Who says so?

MANDERS.

He himself assures me of it. And he is certainly a capital workman.

MRS. ALVING.

Oh, yes; so long as he's sober——

MANDERS.

Ah, that melancholy weakness! But he is often driven to it by his injured leg, he says. Last time he was in town I was really touched by him. He came and thanked me so warmly for having got him work here, so that he might be near Regina.

MRS. ALVING.

He doesn't see much of her.

MANDERS.

Oh, yes; he has a talk with her every day. He told me so himself.

MRS. ALVING.

Well, it may be so.

MANDERS.

He feels so acutely that he needs some one to keep a firm hold on him when temptation comes. That is what I cannot help liking about Jacob Engstrand: he comes to you so helplessly, accusing himself and confessing his own weakness. The last time he was talking to me—— Believe me, Mrs. Alving, supposing it were a real necessity for him to have Regina home again——

MRS. ALVING.

[*Rising hastily.*] Regina!

MANDERS.

——you must not set yourself against it.

MRS. ALVING.

Indeed I shall set myself against it. And

besides—Regina is to have a position in the Orphanage.

MANDERS.

But, after all, remember he is her father——

MRS. ALVING.

Oh, I know very well what sort of a father he has been to her. No! She shall never go to him with my goodwill.

MANDERS.

[*Rising.*] My dear lady, don't take the matter so warmly. You sadly misjudge poor Engstrand. You seem to be quite terrified——

MRS. ALVING.

[*More quietly.*] It makes no difference. I have taken Regina into my house, and there she shall stay. [*Listens.*] Hush, my dear Mr. Manders; say no more about it. [*Her face lights up with gladness.*] Listen! there is Oswald coming downstairs. Now we'll think of no one but him.

OSWALD ALVING, *in a light overcoat, hat in hand, and smoking a large meerschaum, enters by the door on the left; he stops in the doorway.*

OSWALD.

Oh, I beg your pardon; I thought you were in the study. [*Comes forward.*] Good-morning, Pastor Manders.

MANDERS.

[*Staring.*] Ah——! How strange——!

MRS. ALVING.

Well now, what do you think of him, Mr. Manders?

MANDERS.

I—I—can it really be——?

OSWALD.

Yes, it's really the Prodigal Son, sir.

MANDERS.

[*Protesting.*] My dear young friend——

OSWALD.

Well, then, the Lost Sheep Found.

MRS. ALVING.

Oswald is thinking of the time when you were so much opposed to his becoming a painter.

MANDERS.

To our human eyes many a step seems dubious, which afterwards proves—— [*Wrings his hand.*] But first of all, welcome, welcome home! Do not think, my dear Oswald—I suppose I may call you by your Christian name?

OSWALD.

What else should you call me?

MANDERS.

Very good. What I wanted to say was this, my dear Oswald—you must not think that I utterly condemn the artist's calling. I have no doubt there are many who can keep their inner self unharmed in that profession, as in any other.

OSWALD.

Let us hope so.

MRS. ALVING.

[*Beaming with delight.*] I know one who has kept both his inner and his outer self unharmed. Just look at him, Mr. Manders.

OSWALD.

[*Moves restlessly about the room.*] Yes, yes, my dear mother; let's say no more about it.

MANDERS.

Why, certainly—that is undeniable. And you have begun to make a name for yourself already. The newspapers have often spoken of you, most favourably. Just lately, by-the-bye, I fancy I haven't seen your name quite so often.

OSWALD.

[*Up in the conservatory.*] I haven't been able to paint so much lately.

MRS. ALVING.

Even a painter needs a little rest now and then.

MANDERS.

No doubt, no doubt. And meanwhile he can be preparing himself and mustering his forces for some great work.

OSWALD.

Yes.—Mother, will dinner soon be ready?

MRS. ALVING.

In less than half an hour. He has a capital appetite, thank God.

MANDERS.

And a taste for tobacco, too.

OSWALD.

I found my father's pipe in my room——

MANDERS.

Aha—then that accounts for it!

MRS. ALVING.

For what?

MANDERS.

When Oswald appeared there, in the doorway, with the pipe in his mouth, I could have sworn I saw his father, large as life.

OSWALD.

No, really?

MRS. ALVING.

Oh, how can you say so? Oswald takes after me.

MANDERS.

Yes, but there is an expression about the corners of the mouth—something about the lips—that reminds one exactly of Alving: at any rate, now that he is smoking.

MRS. ALVING.

Not in the least. Oswald has rather a clerical curve about his mouth, I think.

MANDERS.

Yes, yes; some of my colleagues have much the same expression.

MRS. ALVING.

But put your pipe away, my dear boy; I won't have smoking in here.

OSWALD.

[*Does so.*] By all means. I only wanted to try it; for I once smoked it when I was a child.

MRS. ALVING.

You?

OSWALD.

Yes. I was quite small at the time. I recollect I came up to father's room one evening when he was in great spirits.

MRS. ALVING.

Oh, you can't recollect anything of those times.

OSWALD.

Yes, I recollect it distinctly. He took me on his knee, and gave me the pipe. "Smoke, boy," he said; "smoke away, boy!" And I smoked as hard as I could, until I felt I was growing quite pale, and the perspiration stood in great drops on my forehead. Then he burst out laughing heartily——

MANDERS.

That was most extraordinary.

MRS. ALVING.

My dear friend, it's only something Oswald has dreamt.

OSWALD.

No, mother, I assure you I didn't dream it. For —don't you remember this?—you came and

carried me out into the nursery. Then I was sick, and I saw that you were crying.—Did father often play such practical jokes?

MANDERS.

In his youth he overflowed with the joy of life——

OSWALD.

And yet he managed to do so much in the world; so much that was good and useful; although he died so early.

MANDERS.

Yes, you have inherited the name of an energetic and admirable man, my dear Oswald Alving. No doubt it will be an incentive to you——

OSWALD.

It ought to, indeed.

MANDERS.

It was good of you to come home for the ceremony in his honour.

OSWALD.

I could do no less for my father.

MRS. ALVING.

And I am to keep him so long! That is the best of all.

MANDERS.

You are going to pass the winter at home, I hear.

OSWALD.

My stay is indefinite, sir.—But, ah! it is good to be at home!

MRS. ALVING.

[*Beaming.*] Yes, isn't it, dear?

MANDERS.

[*Looking sympathetically at him.*] You went out into the world early, my dear Oswald.

OSWALD.

I did. I sometimes wonder whether it wasn't too early.

MRS. ALVING.

Oh, not at all. A healthy lad is all the better for it; especially when he's an only child. He oughtn't to hang on at home with his mother and father, and get spoilt.

MANDERS.

That is a very disputable point, Mrs. Alving. A child's proper place is, and must be, the home of his fathers.

OSWALD.

There I quite agree with you, Pastor Manders.

MANDERS.

Only look at your own son—there is no reason why we should not say it in his presence—what has the consequence been for him? He is six or seven and twenty, and has never had the opportunity of learning what a well-ordered home really is.

OSWALD.

I beg your pardon, Pastor; there you're quite mistaken.

MANDERS.

Indeed? I thought you had lived almost exclusively in artistic circles.

OSWALD.

So I have.

MANDERS.

And chiefly among the youngerartists?

OSWALD

Yes, certainly.

MANDERS.

But I thought few of those young fellows could afford to set up house and support a family.

OSWALD.

There are many who cannot afford to marry, sir.

MANDERS.

Yes, that is just what I say.

OSWALD.

But they may have a home for all that. And several of them have, as a matter of fact; and very pleasant, well-ordered homes they are, too.

[MRS. ALVING *follows with breathless interest; nods, but says nothing.*

MANDERS.

But I'm not talking of bachelors' quarters. By a "home" I understand the home of a family, where a man lives with his wife and children.

OSWALD.

Yes; or with his children and his children's mother.

MANDERS.

[*Starts; clasps his hands.*] But, good heavens——

OSWALD.

Well?

MANDERS.

Lives with—his children's mother!

OSWALD.

Yes. Would you have him turn his children's mother out of doors?

MANDERS.

Then it is illicit relations you are talking of! Irregular marriages, as people call them!

OSWALD.

I have never noticed anything particularly irregular about the life these people lead.

MANDERS.

But how is it possible that a—a young man or young woman with any decency of feeling can endure to live in that way?—in the eyes of all the world!

OSWALD.

What are they to do? A poor young artist—a poor girl—marriage costs a great deal. What are they to do?

MANDERS.

What are they to do? Let me tell you, Mr.

Alving, what they ought to do. They ought to exercise self-restraint from the first; that is what they ought to do.

OSWALD.

That doctrine will scarcely go down with warm-blooded young people who love each other.

MRS. ALVING.

No, scarcely!

MANDERS.

[*Continuing.*] How can the authorities tolerate such things! Allow them to go on in the light of day! [*Confronting* MRS. ALVING.] Had I not cause to be deeply concerned about your son? In circles where open immorality prevails, and has even a sort of recognised position——!

OSWALD.

Let me tell you, sir, that I have been in the habit of spending nearly all my Sundays in one or two such irregular homes——

MANDERS.

Sunday of all days!

OSWALD.

Isn't that the day to enjoy one's self? Well, never have I heard an offensive word, and still less have I witnessed anything that could be called immoral. No; do you know when and where I have come across immorality in artistic circles?

MANDERS.

No, thank heaven, I don't!

OSWALD.

Well, then, allow me to inform you. I have met with it when one or other of our pattern husbands and fathers has come to Paris to have a look round on his own account, and has done the artists the honour of visiting their humble haunts. They knew what was what. These gentlemen could tell us all about places and things we had never dreamt of.

MANDERS.

What! Do you mean to say that respectable men from home here would——?

OSWALD.

Have you never heard these respectable men, when they got home again, talking about the way in which immorality runs rampant abroad?

MANDERS.

Yes, no doubt——

MRS. ALVING.

I have too.

OSWALD.

Well, you may take their word for it. They know what they are talking about! [*Presses his hands to his head.*] Oh! that that great, free, glorious life out there should be defiled in such a way!

MRS. ALVING.

You mustn't get excited, Oswald. It's not good for you.

OSWALD.

Yes; you're quite right, mother. It's bad for

me, I know. You see, I'm wretchedly worn out. I shall go for a little turn before dinner. Excuse me, Pastor: I know you can't take my point of view; but I couldn't help speaking out.

[*He goes out by the second door to the right.*

MRS. ALVING.

My poor boy!

MANDERS.

You may well say so. Then this is what he has come to! [MRS. ALVING *looks at him silently.*

MANDERS.

[*Walking up and down.*] He called himself the Prodigal Son. Alas! alas!

[MRS. ALVING *continues looking at him.*

MANDERS.

And what do you say to all this?

MRS. ALVING.

I say that Oswald was right in every word.

MANDERS.

[*Stands still.*] Right? Right! In such principles?

MRS. ALVING.

Here, in my loneliness, I have come to the same way of thinking, Pastor Manders. But I have never dared to say anything. Well! now my boy shall speak for me.

MANDERS.

You are greatly to be pitied, Mrs. Alving. But now I must speak seriously to you. And now it

is no longer your business manager and adviser, your own and your husband's early friend, who stands before you. It is the priest—the priest who stood before you in the moment of your life when you had gone farthest astray.

MRS. ALVING.

And what has the priest to say to me?

MANDERS.

I will first stir up your memory a little. The moment is well chosen. To-morrow will be the tenth anniversary of your husband's death. To-morrow the memorial in his honour will be unveiled. To-morrow I shall have to speak to the whole assembled multitude. But to-day I will speak to you alone.

MRS. ALVING.

Very well, Pastor Manders. Speak.

MANDERS.

Do you remember that after less than a year of married life you stood on the verge of an abyss? That you forsook your house and home? That you fled from your husband? Yes, Mrs. Alving—fled, fled, and refused to return to him, however much he begged and prayed you?

MRS. ALVING.

Have you forgotten how infinitely miserable I was in that first year?

MANDERS.

It is the very mark of the spirit of rebellion to crave for happiness in this life. What right have

we human beings to happiness? We have simply to do our duty, Mrs. Alving! And your duty was to hold firmly to the man you had once chosen, and to whom you were bound by the holiest ties.

MRS. ALVING.

You know very well what sort of life Alving was leading—what excesses he was guilty of.

MANDERS.

I know very well what rumours there were about him; and I am the last to approve the life he led in his young days, if report did not wrong him. But a wife is not appointed to be her husband's judge. It was your duty to bear with humility the cross which a Higher Power had, in its wisdom, laid upon you. But instead of that you rebelliously throw away the cross, desert the backslider whom you should have supported, go and risk your good name and reputation, and—nearly succeed in ruining other people's reputation into the bargain.

MRS. ALVING.

Other people's? One other person's, you mean.

MANDERS.

It was incredibly reckless of you to seek refuge with me.

MRS. ALVING.

With our clergyman? With our intimate friend?

MANDERS.

Just on that account. Yes, you may thank God that I possessed the necessary firmness; that I succeeded in dissuading you from your wild

designs; and that it was vouchsafed me to lead you back to the path of duty, and home to your lawful husband.

MRS. ALVING.

Yes, Pastor Manders, that was certainly your work.

MANDERS.

I was but a poor instrument in a Higher Hand. And what a blessing has it not proved to you, all the days of your life, that I induced you to resume the yoke of duty and obedience! Did not everything happen as I foretold? Did not Alving turn his back on his errors, as a man should? Did he not live with you from that time, lovingly and blamelessly, all his days? Did he not become a benefactor to the whole district? And did he not help you to rise to his own level, so that you, little by little, became his assistant in all his undertakings? And a capital assistant, too—oh, I know, Mrs. Alving, that praise is due to you.—But now I come to the next great error in your life.

MRS. ALVING.

What do you mean?

MANDERS.

Just as you once disowned a wife's duty, so you have since disowned a mother's.

MRS. ALVING.

Ah——!

MANDERS.

You have been all your life under the dominion of a pestilent spirit of self-will. The whole bias of your mind has been towards insubordination

and lawlessness. You have never known how to endure any bond. Everything that has weighed upon you in life you have cast away without care or consciousness, like a burden you were free to throw off at will. It did not please you to be a wife any longer, and you left your husband. You found it troublesome to be a mother, and you sent your child forth among strangers.

MRS. ALVING.

Yes, that is true. I did so.

MANDERS.

And thus you have become a stranger to him.

MRS. ALVING.

No! no! I am not.

MANDERS.

Yes, you are; you must be. And in what state of mind has he returned to you? Bethink yourself well, Mrs. Alving. You sinned greatly against your husband;—that you recognise by raising yonder memorial to him. Recognise now, also, how you have sinned against your son—there may yet be time to lead him back from the paths of error. Turn back yourself, and save what may yet be saved in him. For [With and that lieutenant—verily, Mrs. Alving, you are a guilt-laden mother.]—This I have thought it my duty to say to you.

[Silence.

MRS. ALVING.

[Slowly and with self-control.] You have now spoken out, Pastor Manders; and to-morrow you are to speak publicly in memory of my husband.

I shall not speak to-morrow But now I will speak frankly to you, as you have spoken to me.

MANDERS.

To be sure; you will plead excuses for your conduct——

MRS. ALVING.

No. I will only tell you a story.

MANDERS.

Well——?

MRS. ALVING.

All that you have just said about my husband and me, and our life after you had brought me back to the path of duty—as you called it—about all that you know nothing from personal observation. From that moment you, who had been our intimate friend, never set foot in our house again.

MANDERS.

You and your husband left the town immediately after.

MRS. ALVING.

Yes; and in my husband's lifetime you never came to see us. It was business that forced you to visit me when you undertook the affairs of the Orphanage.

MANDERS.

[*Softly and hesitatingly.*] Helen—if that is meant as a reproach, I would beg you to bear in mind ——

MRS. ALVING.

——the regard you owed to your position, yes;

and that I was a runaway wife. One can never be too cautious with such unprincipled creatures.

MANDERS.

My dear—Mrs. Alving, you know that is an absurd exaggeration——

MRS. ALVING.

Well well, suppose it is. My point is that your judgment as to my married life is founded upon nothing but common knowledge and report.

MANDERS.

I admit that. What then?

MRS. ALVING.

Well, then, Pastor Manders—I will tell you the truth. I have sworn to myself that one day you should know it—you alone!

MANDERS.

What is the truth, then?

MRS. ALVING.

The truth is that my husband died just as dissolute as he had lived all his days.

MANDERS.

[*Feeling after a chair.*] What do you say?

MRS. ALVING.

After nineteen years of marriage, as dissolute—in his desires at any rate—as he was before you married us.

MANDERS.

And those—those wild oats—those irregu-

larities—those excesses, if you like—you call "a dissolute life"?

MRS. ALVING.

Our doctor used the expression.

MANDERS.

I do not understand you.

MRS. ALVING.

You need not.

MANDERS.

It almost makes me dizzy. Your whole married life, the seeming union of all these years, was nothing more than a hidden abyss!

MRS. ALVING.

Neither more nor less. Now you know it.

MANDERS.

This is—this is inconceivable to me. I cannot grasp it! I cannot realise it! But how was it possible to——? How could such a state of things be kept recret?

MRS. ALVING.

That has been my ceaseless struggle, day after day. After Oswald's birth, I thought Alving seemed to be a little better. But it did not last long. And then I had to struggle twice as hard, fighting as though for life or death, so that nobody should know what sort of man my child's father was. And you know what power Alving had of winning people's hearts. Nobody seemed able to believe anything but good of him. He was one of those people whose life does not bite upon

their reputation. But at last, Mr. Manders—for you must know the whole story—the most repulsive thing of all happened.

MANDERS.

More repulsive than what you have told me!

MRS. ALVING.

I had gone on bearing with him, although I knew very well the secrets of his life out of doors. But when he brought the scandal within our own walls——

MANDERS.

Impossible! Here!

MRS. ALVING.

Yes; here in our own home. It was there [*Pointing towards the first door on the right*], in the dining-room, that I first came to know of it. I was busy with something in there, and the door was standing ajar. I heard our housemaid come up from the garden, with water for those flowers.

MANDERS.

Well——?

MRS. ALVING.

Soon after, I heard Alving come in too. I heard him say something softly to her. And then I heard—[*With a short laugh*]—oh! it still sounds in my ears, so hateful and yet so ludicrous—I heard my own servant-maid whisper, "Let me go, Mr. Alving! Let me be!"

MANDERS.

What unseemly levity on his part! But it

cannot have been more than levity, Mrs. Alving; believe me, it cannot.

MRS. ALVING.

I soon knew what to believe. Mr. Alving had his way with the girl; and that connection had consequences, Mr. Manders.

MANDERS.

[*As though petrified.*] Such things in this house: in this house!

MRS. ALVING.

I had borne a great deal in this house. To keep him at home in the evenings, and at night, I had to make myself his boon companion in his secret orgies up in his room. There I have had to sit alone with him, to clink glasses and drink with him, and to listen to his ribald, silly talk. I have had to fight with him to get him dragged to bed——

MANDERS.

[*Moved.*] And you were able to bear all this!

MRS. ALVING.

I had to bear it for my little boy's sake. But when the last insult was added; when my own servant-maid——; then I swore to myself: This shall come to an end! And so I took the reins into my own hand—the whole control—over him and everything else. For now I had a weapon against him, you see; he dared not oppose me. It was then I sent Oswald away from home. He was nearly seven years old, and was beginning to observe and ask questions, as children do. That I could not bear. It seemed to me the child

must be poisoned by merely breathing the air of this polluted home. That was why I sent him away. And now you can see, too, why he was never allowed to set foot inside his home so long as his father lived. No one knows what that cost me.

MANDERS.

You have indeed had a life of trial.

MRS. ALVING.

I could never have borne it if I had not had my work. For I may truly say that I have worked! All the additions to the estate—all the improvements—all the labour-saving appliances, that Alving was so much praised for having introduced—do you suppose he had energy for anything of the sort?—he, who lay all day on the sofa, reading an old Court Guide! No; but I may tell you this too: when he had his better intervals, it was I who urged him on; it was I who had to drag the whole load when he relapsed into his evil ways, or sank into querulous wretchedness.

MANDERS.

And it is to this man that you raise a memorial?

MRS. ALVING.

There you see the power of an evil conscience.

MANDERS.

Evil——? What do you mean?

MRS. ALVING.

It always seemed to me impossible but that the truth must come out and be believed. So the

Orphanage was to deaden all rumours and set every doubt at rest.

MANDERS.

In that you have certainly not missed your aim, Mrs. Alving.

MRS. ALVING.

And besides, I had one other reason. I was determined that Oswald, my own boy, should inherit nothing whatever from his father.

MANDERS.

Then it is Alving's fortune that——?

MRS. ALVING.

Yes. The sums I have spent upon the Orphanage, year by year, make up the amount—I have reckoned it up precisely—the amount which made Lieutenant Alving "a good match" in his day.

MANDERS.

I don't understand ——

MRS. ALVING.

It was my purchase-money. I do not choose that that money should pass into Oswald's hands. My son shall have everything from me—everything.

OSWALD ALVING *enters through the second door to the right; he has taken off his hat and overcoat in the hall.*

MRS. ALVING.

[*Going towards him.*] Are you back again already? My dear, dear boy!

OSWALD.

Yes. What can a fellow do out of doors in this eternal rain? But I hear dinner is ready. That's capital!

REGINA.

[*With a parcel, from the dining-room.*] A parcel has come for you, Mrs. Alving. [*Hands it to her.*

MRS. ALVING.

[*With a glance at* MR. MANDERS.] No doubt copies of the ode for to-morrow's ceremony.

MANDERS.

H'm——

REGINA.

And dinner is ready.

MRS. ALVING.

Very well. We will come directly. I will just—— [*Begins to open the parcel.*

REGINA.

[*To* OSWALD.] Would Mr. Alving like red or white wine?

OSWALD.

Both, if you please.

REGINA.

Bien. Very well, sir.

[*She goes into the dining-room.*

OSWALD.

I may as well help to uncork it.

[*He also goes into the dining room, the door of which swings half open behind him.*

MRS. ALVING.

[*Who has opened the parcel.*] Yes, I thought so. Here is the Ceremonial Ode, Pastor Manders.

MANDERS.

[*With folded hands.*] With what countenance I am to deliver my discourse to-morrow——!

MRS. ALVING.

Oh, you will get through it somehow.

MANDERS.

[*Softly, so as not to be heard in the dining-room.*] Yes; it would not do to provoke scandal.

MRS. ALVING.

[*Under her breath, but firmly.*] No. But then this long, hateful comedy will be ended. From the day after to-morrow, I shall act in every way as though he who is dead had never lived in this house. There shall be no one here but my boy and his mother.

[*From the dining-room comes the noise of a chair overturned, and at the same moment is heard:*

REGINA.

[*Sharply, but in a whisper.*] Oswald! take care! are you mad? Let me go!

MRS. ALVING.

[*Starts in terror.*] Ah——!

[*She stares wildly towards the half-open door.* OSWALD *is heard laughing and humming. A bottle is uncorked.*

MANDERS.

[*Agitated.*] What can be the matter? What is it, Mrs. Alving?

MRS. ALVING.

[*Hoarsely.*] Ghosts! The couple from the conservatory—risen again!

MANDERS.

Is it possible! Regina——? Is she——?

MRS. ALVING.

Yes. Come. Not a word——!

[*She seizes* PASTOR MANDERS *by the arm, and walks unsteadily towards the dining-room.*

ACT SECOND.

The same room. The mist still lies heavy over the landscape.

MANDERS *and* MRS. ALVING *enter from the dining-room.*

MRS. ALVING.

[*Still in the doorway.*] *Velbekomme*,[1] Mr. Manders. [*Turns back towards the dining room.*] Aren't you coming too, Oswald?

OSWALD.

[*From within.*] No, thank you. I think I shall go out a little.

MRS. ALVING.

Yes, do. The weather seems a little brighter now. [*She shuts the dining-room door, goes to the hall door, and calls:*] Regina!

REGINA.

[*Outside.*] Yes, Mrs. Alving?

MRS. ALVING.

Go down to the laundry, and help with the garlands.

[1] A phrase equivalent to the German *Prosit die Mahlzeit*—"May good digestion wait on appetite."

REGINA.

Yes, Mrs. Alving.

[MRS. ALVING *assures herself that* REGINA *goes; then shuts the door.*

MANDERS.

I suppose he cannot overhear us in there?

MRS. ALVING.

Not when the door is shut. Besides, he's just going out.

MANDERS.

I am still quite upset. I don't know how I could swallow a morsel of dinner.

MRS. ALVING.

[*Controlling her nervousness, walks up and down.*] Nor I. But what is to be done now?

MANDERS.

Yes; what is to be done? I am really quite at a loss. I am so utterly without experience in matters of this sort.

MRS. ALVING.

I feel sure that, so far, no mischief has been done.

MANDERS.

No; heaven forbid! But it is an unseemly state of things, nevertheless.

MRS. ALVING.

It is only an idle fancy on Oswald's part; you may be sure of that.

MANDERS.

Well, as I say, I am not accustomed to affairs of the kind. But I should certainly think——

MRS. ALVING.

Out of the house she must go, and that immediately. That is as clear as daylight——

MANDERS.

Yes, of course she must.

MRS. ALVING.

But where to? It would not be right to——

MANDERS.

Where to? Home to her father, of course.

MRS. ALVING.

To whom did you say?

MANDERS.

To her—— But then, Engstrand is not——? Good God, Mrs. Alving, it's impossible! You must be mistaken after all.

MRS. ALVING.

Unfortunately there is no possibility of mistake. Johanna confessed everything to me; and Alving could not deny it. So there was nothing to be done but to get the matter hushed up.

MANDERS.

No, you could do nothing else.

MRS. ALVING.

The girl left our service at once, and got a good

sum of money to hold her tongue for the time. The rest she managed for herself when she got to town. She renewed her old acquaintance with Engstrand, no doubt let him see that she had money in her purse, and told him some tale about a foreigner who put in here with a yacht that summer. So she and Engstrand got married in hot haste. Why, you married them yourself.

MANDERS.

But then how to account for——? I recollect distinctly Engstrand coming to give notice of the marriage. He was quite overwhelmed with contrition, and bitterly reproached himself for the misbehaviour he and his sweetheart had been guilty of.

MRS. ALVING.

Yes; of course he had to take the blame upon himself.

MANDERS.

But such a piece of duplicity on his part! And towards me too! I never could have believed it of Jacob Engstrand. I shall not fail to take him seriously to task; he may be sure of that. —And then the immorality of such a connection! For money——! How much did the girl receive?

MRS. ALVING.

Three hundred dollars.

MANDERS.

Just think of it—for a miserable three hundred dollars, to go and marry a fallen woman!

MRS. ALVING.

Then what have you to say of me? I went and married a fallen man.

MANDERS.

Why—good heavens!—what are you talking about! A fallen man!

MRS. ALVING.

Do you think Alving was any purer when I went with him to the altar than Johanna was when Engstrand married her?

MANDERS.

Well, but there is a world of difference between the two cases——

MRS. ALVING.

Not so much difference after all—except in the price: —a miserable three hundred dollars and a whole fortune.

MANDERS.

How can you compare such absolutely dissimilar cases? You had taken counsel with your own heart and with your natural advisers.

MRS. ALVING.

[*Without looking at him.*] I thought you understood where what you call my heart had strayed to at the time.

MANDERS.

[*Distantly.*] Had I understood anything of the kind, I should not have been a daily guest in your husband's house.

MRS. ALVING.

At any rate, the fact remains that with myself I took no counsel whatever.

MANDERS.

Well then, with your nearest relatives—as your duty bade you—with your mother and your two aunts.

MRS. ALVING.

Yes, that is true. Those three cast up the account for me. Oh, it's marvellous how clearly they made out that it would be downright madness to refuse such an offer. If mother could only see me now, and know what all that grandeur has come to!

MANDERS.

Nobody can be held responsible for the result. This, at least, remains clear: your marriage was in full accordance with law and order.

MRS. ALVING.

[*At the window.*] Oh, that perpetual law and order! I often think that is what does all the mischief in this world of ours.

MANDERS.

Mrs. Alving, that is a sinful way of talking.

MRS. ALVING.

Well, I can't help it; I must have done with all this constraint and insincerity. I can endure it no longer. I must work my way out to freedom.

MANDERS.

What do you mean by that?

MRS. ALVING.

[*Drumming on the window-frame.*] I ought never to have concealed the facts of Alving's life. But at that time I dared not do anything else—I was afraid, partly on my own account. I was such a coward.

MANDERS.

A coward?

MRS. ALVING.

If people had come to know anything, they would have said—"Poor man! with a runaway wife, no wonder he kicks over the traces."

MANDERS.

Such remarks might have been made with a certain show of right.

MRS. ALVING.

[*Looking steadily at him.*] If I were what I ought to be, I should go to Oswald and say, "Listen, my boy: your father led a vicious life——"

MANDERS.

Merciful heavens——!

MRS. ALVING.

——and then I should tell him all I have told you—every word of it.

MANDERS.

You shock me unspeakably, Mrs. Alving.

MRS. ALVING.

Yes; I know that. I know that very well. I myself am shocked at the idea. [*Goes away from the window.*] I am such a coward.

MANDERS.

You call it "cowardice" to do your plain duty? Have you forgotten that a son ought to love and honour his father and mother?

MRS. ALVING.

Do not let us talk in such general terms. Let us ask: Ought Oswald to love and honour Chamberlain Alving?

MANDERS.

Is there no voice in your mother's heart that forbids you to destroy your son's ideals?

MRS. ALVING.

But what about the truth?

MANDERS.

But what about the ideals?

MRS. ALVING.

Oh—ideals, ideals! If only I were not such a coward!

MANDERS.

Do not despise ideals, Mrs. Alving; they will avenge themselves cruelly. Take Oswald's case: he, unfortunately, seems to have few enough ideals as it is; but I can see that his father stands before him as an ideal.

MRS. ALVING.

Yes, that is true.

MANDERS.

And this habit of mind you have yourself implanted and fostered by your letters.

MRS. ALVING.

Yes; in my superstitious awe for duty and the proprieties, I lied to my boy, year after year. Oh, what a coward—what a coward I have been!

MANDERS.

You have established a happy illusion in your son's heart, Mrs. Alving; and assuredly you ought not to undervalue it.

MRS. ALVING.

H'm; who knows whether it is so happy after all——? But, at any rate, I will not have any tampering with Regina. He shall not go and wreck the poor girl's life.

MANDERS.

No; good God—that would be terrible!

MRS. ALVING.

If I knew he was in earnest, and that it would be for his happiness——

MANDERS.

What? What then?

MRS. ALVING.

But it couldn't be; for unfortunately Regina is not the right sort of woman.

MANDERS.

Well, what then? What do you mean?

MRS. ALVING.

If I weren't such a pitiful coward, I should say

to him, "Marry her, or make what arrangement you please, only let us have nothing underhand about it."

MANDERS.

Merciful heavens, would you let them marry! Anything so dreadful——! so unheard of——

MRS. ALVING.

Do you really mean "unheard of"? Frankly, Pastor Manders, do you suppose that throughout the country there are not plenty of married couples as closely akin as they?

MANDERS.

I don't in the least understand you.

MRS. ALVING.

Oh yes, indeed you do.

MANDERS.

Ah, you are thinking of the possibility that—— Alas! yes, family life is certainly not always so pure as it ought to be. But in such a case as you point to, one can never know—at least with any certainty. Here, on the other hand—that you, a mother, can think of letting your son——!

MRS. ALVING.

But I cannot—I wouldn't for anything in the world; that is precisely what I am saying.

MANDERS.

No, because you are a "coward," as you put it. But if you were not a "coward," then——? Good God! a connection so shocking!

MRS. ALVING.

So far as that goes, they say we are all sprung from connections of that sort. And who is it that arranged the world so, Pastor Manders?

MANDERS.

Questions of that kind I must decline to discuss with you, Mrs. Alving; you are far from being in the right frame of mind for them. But that you dare to call your scruples "cowardly"——!

MRS. ALVING.

Let me tell you what I mean. I am timid and faint-hearted because of the ghosts that hang about me, and that I can never quite shake off.

MANDERS.

What do you say hangs about you?

MRS. ALVING.

Ghosts! When I heard Regina and Oswald in there, it was as though ghosts rose up before me. But I almost think we are all of us ghosts, Pastor Manders. It is not only what we have inherited from our father and mother that "walks" in us. It is all sorts of dead ideas, and lifeless old beliefs, and so forth. They have no vitality, but they cling to us all the same, and we cannot shake them off. Whenever I take up a newspaper, I seem to see ghosts gliding between the lines. There must be ghosts all the country over, as thick as the sands of the sea. And then we are, one and all, so pitifully afraid of the light.

MANDERS.

Aha—here we have the fruits of your reading. And pretty fruits they are, upon my word! Oh, those horrible, revolutionary, freethinking books!

MRS. ALVING.

You are mistaken, my dear Pastor. It was you yourself who set me thinking; and I thank you for it with all my heart.

MANDERS.

I!

MRS. ALVING.

Yes—when you forced me under the yoke of what you called duty and obligation; when you lauded as right and proper what my whole soul rebelled against as something loathsome. It was then that I began to look into the seams of your doctrines. I wanted only to pick at a single knot; but when I had got that undone, the whole thing ravelled out. And then I understood that it was all machine-sewn.

MANDERS.

[*Softly, with emotion.*] And was that the upshot of my life's hardest battle?

MRS. ALVING.

Call it rather your most pitiful defeat.

MANDERS.

It was my greatest victory, Helen—the victory over myself.

MRS. ALVING.

It was a crime against us both.

MANDERS.

When you went astray, and came to me crying, "Here I am; take me!" I commanded you, saying, "Woman, go home to your lawful husband." Was that a crime?

MRS. ALVING.

Yes, I think so.

MANDERS.

We two do not understand each other.

MRS. ALVING.

Not now, at any rate.

MANDERS.

Never—never in my most secret thoughts have I regarded you otherwise than as another's wife.

MRS. ALVING.

Oh—indeed?

MANDERS.

Helen——!

MRS. ALVING.

People so easily forget their past selves.

MANDERS.

I do not. I am what I always was.

MRS. ALVING.

[*Changing the subject.*] Well well well; don't let us talk of old times any longer. You are now over head and ears in Boards and Committees, and I am fighting my battle with ghosts, both within me and without.

MANDERS.

Those without I shall help you to lay. After all the terrible things I have heard from you today, I cannot in conscience permit an unprotected girl to remain in your house.

MRS. ALVING.

Don't you think the best plan would be to get her provided for?—I mean, by a good marriage.

MANDERS.

No doubt. I think it would be desirable for her in every respect. Regina is now at the age when—— Of course I don't know much about these things, but——

MRS. ALVING.

Regina matured very early.

MANDERS.

Yes, I thought so. I have an impression that she was remarkably well developed, physically, when I prepared her for confirmation. But in the meantime, she ought to be at home, under her father's eye—— Ah! but Engstrand is not—— That he—that he—could so hide the truth from me! [*A knock at the door into the hall.*

MRS. ALVING.

Who can this be? Come in!

ENGSTRAND.

[*In his Sunday clothes, in the doorway.*] I humbly beg your pardon, but——

MANDERS.

Aha! H'm——

MRS. ALVING.

Is that you, Engstrand?

ENGSTRAND.

——there was none of the servants about, so I took the great liberty of just knocking.

MRS. ALVING.

Oh, very well. Come in. Do you want to speak to me?

ENGSTRAND.

[*Comes in.*] No, I'm obliged to you, ma'am; it was with his Reverence I wanted to have a word or two.

MANDERS.

[*Walking up and down the room.*] Ah—indeed! You want to speak to me, do you?

ENGSTRAND.

Yes, I'd like so terrible much to——

MANDERS.

[*Stops in front of him.*] Well; may I ask what you want?

ENGSTRAND.

Well, it was just this, your Reverence: we've been paid off down yonder—my grateful thanks to you, ma'am,—and now everything's finished, I've been thinking it would be but right and proper, if we, that have been working so honestly together all this time—well, I was thinking we ought to end up with a little prayer-meeting to-night.

MANDERS.

A prayer-meeting? Down at the Orphanage?

ENGSTRAND.

Oh, if your Reverence doesn't think it proper——

MANDERS.

Oh yes, I do; but—h'm—

ENGSTRAND.

I've been in the habit of offering up a little prayer in the evenings, myself——

MRS. ALVING.

Have you?

ENGSTRAND.

Yes, every now and then—just a little edification, in a manner of speaking. But I'm a poor, common man, and have little enough gift, God help me!—and so I thought, as the Reverend Mr. Manders happened to be here, I'd ——

MANDERS.

Well, you see, Engstrand, I have a question to put to you first. Are you in the right frame of mind for such a meeting! Do you feel your conscience clear and at ease?

ENGSTRAND.

Oh, God help us, your Reverence! we'd better not talk about conscience.

MANDERS.

Yes, that is just what we must talk about. What have you to answer?

ENGSTRAND.

Why—a man's conscience—it can be bad enough now and then.

MANDERS.

Ah, you admit that. Then perhaps you will make a clean breast of it, and tell me—the real truth about Regina?

MRS. ALVING.

[*Quickly.*] Mr. Manders!

MANDERS.

[*Reassuringly.*] Please allow me——

ENGSTRAND.

About Regina! Lord, what a turn you gave me! [*Looks at* MRS. ALVING.] There's nothing wrong about Regina, is there?

MANDERS.

We will hope not. But I mean, what is the truth about you and Regina? You pass for her father, eh!

ENGSTRAND.

[*Uncertain.*] Well—h'm—your Reverence knows all about me and poor Johanna.

MANDERS.

Come now, no more prevarication! Your wife told Mrs. Alving the whole story before quitting her service.

ENGSTRAND.

Well, then, may——! Now, did she really?

MANDERS.

You see we know you now, Engstrand.

ENGSTRAND.

And she swore and took her Bible oath——

MANDERS.

Did she take her Bible oath?

ENGSTRAND

No; she only swore; but she did it that solemn-like.

MANDERS.

And you have hidden the truth from me all these years? Hidden it from me, who have trusted you without reserve, in everything.

ENGSTRAND.

Well, I can't deny it.

MANDERS.

Have I deserved this of you, Engstrand? Have I not always been ready to help you in word and deed, so far as it lay in my power? Answer me. Have I not?

ENGSTRAND.

It would have been a poor look-out for me many a time but for the Reverend Mr. Manders.

MANDERS.

And this is how you reward me! You cause me to enter falsehoods in the Church Register, and you withhold from me, year after year, the explanations you owed alike to me and to the truth. Your conduct has been wholly inexcusable, Engstrand; and from this time forward I have done with you!

ENGSTRAND.

[*With a sigh.*] Yes! I suppose there's no help for it.

MANDERS.

How can you possibly justify yourself?

ENGSTRAND.

Who could ever have thought she'd have gone and made bad worse by talking about it? Will your Reverence just fancy yourself in the same trouble as poor Johanna——

MANDERS.

I!

ENGSTRAND.

Lord bless you, I don't mean just exactly the same. But I mean, if your Reverence had anything to be ashamed of in the eyes of the world, as the saying goes. We menfolk oughtn't to judge a poor woman too hardly, your Reverence.

MANDERS.

I am not doing so. It is you I am reproaching.

ENGSTRAND.

Might I make so bold as to ask your Reverence a bit of a question?

MANDERS.

Yes, if you want to.

ENGSTRAND.

Isn't it right and proper for a man to raise up the fallen?

MANDERS.

Most certainly it is.

ENGSTRAND.

And isn't a man bound to keep his sacred word?

MANDERS.

Why, of course he is; but——

ENGSTRAND.

When Johanna had got into trouble through that Englishman — or it might have been an American or a Russian, as they call them—well, you see, she came down into the town. Poor thing, she'd sent me about my business once or twice before: for she couldn't bear the sight of anything as wasn't handsome; and I'd got this damaged leg of mine. Your Reverence recollects how I ventured up into a dancing saloon, where seafaring men was carrying on with drink and devilry, as the saying goes. And then, when I was for giving them a bit of an admonition to lead a new life——

MRS. ALVING.

[*At the window.*] H'm——

MANDERS.

I know all about that, Engstrand; the ruffians threw you downstairs. You have told me of the affair already. Your infirmity is an honour to you.

ENGSTRAND.

I'm not puffed up about it, your Reverence. But what I wanted to say was, that when she came and confessed all to me, with weeping and gnashing of teeth, I can tell your Reverence I was sore at heart to hear it.

MANDERS.

Were you indeed, Engstrand? Well, go on.

ENGSTRAND.

So I says to her, "The American, he's sailing about on the boundless sea. And as for you, Johanna," says I, "you've committed a grievous sin, and you're a fallen creature. But Jacob Engstrand," says I, "he's got two good legs to stand upon, he has——" You see, your Reverence, I was speaking figurative-like.

MANDERS.

I understand quite well. Go on.

ENGSTRAND.

Well, that was how I raised her up and made an honest woman of her, so as folks shouldn't get to know how as she'd gone astray with foreigners.

MANDERS.

In all that you acted very well. Only I cannot approve of your stooping to take money——

ENGSTRAND.

Money? I? Not a farthing!

MANDERS.

[*Inquiringly to* MRS. ALVING.] But——

ENGSTRAND.

Oh, wait a minute!—now I recollect. Johanna did have a trifle of money. But I would have nothing to do with that. "No," says I, "that's mammon; that's the wages of sin. This dirty gold—or notes, or whatever it was—we'll just fling that back in the American's face," says I. But he was off and away, over the stormy sea, your Reverence.

MANDERS.

Was he really, my good fellow?

ENGSTRAND.

He was indeed, sir. So Johanna and I, we agreed that the money should go to the child's education; and so it did, and I can account for every blessed farthing of it.

MANDERS.

Why, this alters the case considerably.

ENGSTRAND.

That's just how it stands, your Reverence. And I make so bold as to say as I've been an honest father to Regina, so far as my poor strength went; for I'm but a weak vessel, worse luck!

MANDERS.

Well, well, my good fellow——

ENGSTRAND.

All the same, I bear myself witness as I've brought up the child, and lived kindly with poor Johanna, and ruled over my own house, as the Scripture has it. But it couldn't never enter my head to go to your Reverence and puff myself up and boast because even the likes of me had done some good in the world. No, sir; when anything of that sort happens to Jacob Engstrand, he holds his tongue about it. It don't happen so terrible often, I daresay. And when I do come to see your Reverence, I find a mortal deal that's wicked and weak to talk about. For I said it before, and

I says it again—a man's conscience isn't always as clean as it might be.

MANDERS.

Give me your hand, Jacob Engstrand.

ENGSTRAND.

Oh, Lord! your Reverence——

MANDERS.

Come, no nonsense [*wrings his hand*]. There we are!

ENGSTRAND.

And if I might humbly beg your Reverence's pardon——

MANDERS.

You? On the contrary, it is I who ought to beg your pardon——

ENGSTRAND.

Lord, no, sir!

MANDERS.

Yes, assuredly. And I do it with all my heart. Forgive me for misunderstanding you. I only wish I could give you some proof of my hearty regret, and of my good-will towards you——

ENGSTRAND.

Would your Reverence do it?

MANDERS.

With the greatest pleasure.

ENGSTRAND.

Well then, here's the very chance. With the

bit of money I've saved here, I was thinking I might set up a Sailors' Home down in the town.

MRS. ALVING.

You?

ENGSTRAND.

Yes; it might be a sort of Orphanage, too, in a manner of speaking. There's such a many temptations for seafaring folk ashore. But in this Home of mine, a man might feel like as he was under a father's eye, I was thinking.

MANDERS.

What do you say to this, Mrs. Alving?

ENGSTRAND.

It isn't much as I've got to start with, Lord help me! But if I could only find a helping hand, why——

MANDERS.

Yes, yes; we will look into the matter more closely. I entirely approve of your plan. But now, go before me and make everything ready, and get the candles lighted, so as to give the place an air of festivity. And then we will pass an edifying hour together, my good fellow; for now I quite believe you are in the right frame of mind.

ENGSTRAND.

Yes, I trust I am. And so I'll say good-bye, ma'am, and thank you kindly; and take good care of Regina for me—[*Wipes a tear from his eye*]—poor Johanna's child. Well, it's a queer thing,

now ; but it's just like as if she'd growd into the very apple of my eye. It is, indeed.

[*He bows and goes out through the hall.*

MANDERS.

Well, what do you say of that man now, Mrs. Alving ? That was a very different account of matters, was it not ?

MRS. ALVING.

Yes, it certainly was.

MANDERS.

It only shows how excessively careful one ought to be in judging one's fellow creatures. But what a heartfelt joy it is to ascertain that one has been mistaken ! Don't you think so ?

MRS. ALVING.

I think you are, and will always be, a great baby, Manders.

MANDERS.

I ?

MRS. ALVING.

[*Laying her two hands upon his shoulders.*] And I say that I have half a mind to put my arms round your neck, and kiss you.

MANDERS.

[*Stepping hastily back.*] No, no ! God bless me ! What an idea !

MRS. ALVING.

[*With a smile.*] Oh, you needn't be afraid of me.

MANDERS.

[*By the table.*] You have sometimes such an exaggerated way of expressing yourself. Now, let me just collect all the documents, and put them in my bag. [*He does so.*] There, that's all right. And now, good-bye for the present. Keep your eyes open when Oswald comes back. I shall look in again later.

[*He takes his hat and goes out through the hall door.*

MRS. ALVING.

[*Sighs, looks for a moment out of the window, sets the room in order a little, and is about to go into the dining-room, but stops at the door with a half-suppressed cry.*] Oswald, are you still at table?

OSWALD.

[*In the dining room.*] I'm only finishing my cigar.

MRS. ALVING.

I thought you had gone for a little walk.

OSWALD.

In such weather as this?

[*A glass clinks.* MRS. ALVING *leaves the door open, and sits down with her knitting on the sofa by the window.*

OSWALD.

Wasn't that Pastor Manders that went out just now?

MRS. ALVING.

Yes; he went down to the Orphanage.

OSWALD.

H'm. [*The glass and decanter clink again.*

MRS. ALVING.

[*With a troubled glance.*] Dear Oswald, you should take care of that liqueur. It is strong.

OSWALD.

It keeps out the damp.

MRS. ALVING.

Wouldn't you rather come in here, to me?

OSWALD.

I mayn't smoke in there.

MRS. ALVING.

You know quite well you may smoke cigars.

OSWALD.

Oh, all right then; I'll come in. Just a tiny drop more first. There! [*He comes into the room with his cigar, and shuts the door after him. A short silence.*] Where has the pastor gone to?

MRS. ALVING.

I have just told you; he went down to the Orphanage.

OSWALD.

Oh, yes; so you did.

MRS. ALVING.

You shouldn't sit so long at table, Oswald.

OSWALD.

[*Holding his cigar behind him.*] But I find it so

pleasant, mother. [*Strokes and caresses her.*] Just think what it is for me to come home and sit at mother's own table, in mother's room, and eat mother's delicious dishes.

MRS. ALVING.

My dear, dear boy!

OSWALD.

[*Somewhat impatiently, walks about and smokes.*] And what else can I do with myself here? I can't set to work at anything.

MRS. ALVING.

Why can't you?

OSWALD.

In such weather as this? Without a single ray of sunshine the whole day? [*Walks up the room.*] Oh, not to be able to work——!

MRS. ALVING.

Perhaps it was not quite wise of you to come home?

OSWALD.

Oh, yes, mother; I had to.

MRS. ALVING.

You know I would ten times rather forgo the joy of having you here, than let you——

OSWALD.

[*Stops beside the table.*] Now just tell me, mother: does it really make you so very happy to have me home again?

MRS. ALVING.

Does it make me happy!

OSWALD.

[*Crumpling up a newspaper.*] I should have thought it must be pretty much the same to you whether I was in existence or not.

MRS. ALVING.

Have you the heart to say that to your mother, Oswald?

OSWALD.

But you've got on very well without me all this time.

MRS. ALVING.

Yes; I have got on without you. That is true.

[*A silence. Twilight slowly begins to fall.*
OSWALD *paces to and fro across the room.*
He has laid his cigar down.

OSWALD.

[*Stops beside* MRS. ALVING.] Mother, may I sit on the sofa beside you?

MRS. ALVING.

[*Makes room for him.*] Yes, do, my dear boy.

OSWALD.

[*Sits down.*] There is something I must tell you, mother.

MRS. ALVING.

[*Anxiously.*] Well?

OSWALD.

[*Looks fixedly before him.*] For I can't go on hiding it any longer.

MRS. ALVING.

Hiding what? What is it?

OSWALD.

[*As before.*] I could never bring myself to write to you about it; and since I've come home——

MRS. ALVING.

[*Seizes him by the arm.*] Oswald, what is the matter?

OSWALD.

Both yesterday and to-day I have tried to put the thoughts away from me—to cast them off; but it's no use.

MRS. ALVING.

[*Rising.*] Now you must tell me everything, Oswald!

OSWALD.

[*Draws her down to the sofa again.*] Sit still; and then I will try to tell you.—I complained of fatigue after my journey——

MRS. ALVING.

Well? What then?

OSWALD.

But it isn't that that is the matter with me; not any ordinary fatigue——

MRS. ALVING.

[*Tries to jump up.*] You are not ill, Oswald?

OSWALD.

[*Draws her down again.*] Sit still, mother. Do

take it quietly. I'm not downright ill, either; not what is commonly called "ill." [*Clasps his hands above his head.*] Mother, my mind is broken down—ruined—I shall never be able to work again!

[*With his hands before his face, he buries his head in her lap, and breaks into bitter sobbing.*

MRS. ALVING.

[*White and trembling.*] Oswald! Look at me! No, no; it's not true.

OSWALD.

[*Looks up with despair in his eyes.*] Never to be able to work again! Never!—never! A living death! Mother, can you imagine anything so horrible?

MRS. ALVING.

My poor boy! How has this horrible thing come upon you?

OSWALD.

[*Sitting upright again.*] That's just what I cannot possibly grasp or understand. I have never led a dissipated life—never, in any respect. You mustn't believe that of me, mother! I've never done that.

MRS. ALVING.

I am sure you haven't, Oswald.

OSWALD.

And yet this has come upon me just the same—this awful misfortune!

MRS. ALVING.

Oh, but it will pass over, my dear, blessed boy.

It's nothing but over-work. Trust me, I am right.

OSWALD.

[*Sadly.*] I thought so too, at first; but it isn't so.

MRS. ALVING.

Tell me everything, from beginning to end.

OSWALD.

Yes, I will.

MRS. ALVING.

When did you first notice it?

OSWALD.

It was directly after I had been home last time, and had got back to Paris again. I began to feel the most violent pains in my head—chiefly in the back of my head, they seemed to come. It was as though a tight iron ring was being screwed round my neck and upwards.

MRS. ALVING.

Well, and then?

OSWALD.

At first I thought it was nothing but the ordinary headache I had been so plagued with while I was growing up——

MRS. ALVING.

Yes, yes——

OSWALD.

But it wasn't that. I soon found that out. I couldn't work any more. I wanted to begin upon a big new picture, but my powers seemed to fail me; all my strength was crippled; I could form

no definite images; everything swam before me—whirling round and round. Oh, it was an awful state! At last I sent for a doctor—and from him I learned the truth.

MRS. ALVING.

How do you mean?

OSWALD.

He was one of the first doctors in Paris. I told him my symptoms; and then he set to work asking me a string of questions which I thought had nothing to do with the matter. I couldn't imagine what the man was after——

MRS. ALVING.

Well?

OSWALD.

At last he said: "There has been something worm-eaten in you from your birth." He used that very word—*vermoulu.*

MRS. ALVING.

[*Breathlessly.*] What did he mean by that?

OSWALD.

I didn't understand either, and begged him to explain himself more clearly. And then the old cynic said—[*Clenching his fist*] Oh——!

MRS. ALVING.

What did he say?

OSWALD.

He said, "The sins of the fathers are visited upon the children."

MRS. ALVING.

[*Rising slowly.*] The sins of the fathers——!

OSWALD.

I very nearly struck him in the face——

MRS. ALVING.

[*Walks away across the room.*] The sins of the fathers——

OSWALD.

[*Smiles sadly.*] Yes; what do you think of that? Of course I assured him that such a thing was out of the question. But do you think he gave in? No, he stuck to it; and it was only when I produced your letters and translated the passages relating to father——

MRS. ALVING.

But then——?

OSWALD.

Then of course he had to admit that he was on the wrong track; and so I learned the truth—the incomprehensible truth! I ought not to have taken part with my comrades in that light-hearted, glorious life of theirs. It had been too much for my strength. So I had brought it upon myself!

MRS. ALVING.

Oswald! No, no; do not believe it!

OSWALD.

No other explanation was possible, he said. That's the awful part of it. Incurably ruined for life—by my own heedlessness! All that I meant

to have done in the world—I never dare think of it again—I'm not able to think of it. Oh! if I could only live over again, and undo all I have done! [*He buries his face in the sofa.*

MRS. ALVING.

[*Wrings her hands and walks, in silent struggle, backwards and forwards.*]

OSWALD.

[*After a while, looks up and remains resting upon his elbow.*] If it had only been something inherited—something one wasn't responsible for! But this! To have thrown away so shamefully, thoughtlessly, recklessly, one's own happiness, one's own health, everything in the world—one's future, one's very life——!

MRS. ALVING.

No, no, my dear, darling boy; this is impossible! [*Bends over him.*] Things are not so desperate as you think.

OSWALD.

Oh, you don't know—— [*Springs up.*] And then, mother, to cause you all this sorrow! Many a time I have almost wished and hoped that at bottom you didn't care so very much about me.

MRS. ALVING.

I, Oswald? My only boy! You are all I have in the world! The only thing I care about!

OSWALD.

[*Seizes both her hands and kisses them.*] Yes, yes, I see it. When I'm at home, I see it, of course;

and that's almost the hardest part for me.—But now you know the whole story; and now we won't talk any more about it to-day. I daren't think of it for long together. [*Goes up the room.*] Get me something to drink, mother.

MRS. ALVING.

To drink? What do you want to drink now?

OSWALD.

Oh, anything you like. You have some cold punch in the house.

MRS. ALVING.

Yes, but my dear Oswald——

OSWALD.

Don't refuse me, mother. Do be kind, now! I must have something to wash down all these gnawing thoughts. [*Goes into the conservatory.*] And then——it's so dark here! [MRS. ALVING *pulls a bell-rope on the right.*] And this ceaseless rain! It may go on week after week, for months together. Never to get a glimpse of the sun! I can't recollect ever having seen the sun shine all the times I've been at home.

MRS. ALVING.

Oswald—you are thinking of going away from me.

OSWALD.

H'm—[*Drawing a heavy breath.*]—I'm not thinking of anything. I cannot think of anything! [*In a low voice.*] I let thinking alone.

REGINA.

[*From the dining-room.*] Did you ring, ma'am?

MRS. ALVING.

Yes; let us have the lamp in.

REGINA.

Yes, ma'am. It's ready lighted. [*Goes out.*

MRS. ALVING.

[*Goes across to* OSWALD.] Oswald, be frank with me.

OSWALD.

Well, so I am, mother. [*Goes to the table.*] I think I have told you enough.

[REGINA *brings the lamp and sets it upon the table.*

MRS. ALVING.

Regina, you may bring us a small bottle of champagne.

REGINA.

Very well, ma'am. [*Goes out.*

OSWALD.

[*Puts his arm round* MRS. ALVING'S *neck.*] That's just what I wanted. I knew mother wouldn't let her boy go thirsty.

MRS. ALVING.

My own, poor, darling Oswald; how could I deny you anything now?

OSWALD.

[*Eagerly.*] Is that true, mother? Do you mean it?

MRS. ALVING.

How? What?

OSWALD.

That you couldn't deny me anything.

MRS. ALVING.

My dear Oswald——

OSWALD.

Hush!

REGINA.

[*Brings a tray with a half-bottle of champagne and two glasses, which she sets on the table.*] Shall I open it?

OSWALD.

No, thanks. I will do it myself.

[REGINA *goes out again.*

MRS. ALVING.

[*Sits down by the table.*] What was it you meant —that I musn't deny you?

OSWALD.

[*Busy opening the bottle.*] First let us have a glass —or two.

[*The cork pops; he pours wine into one glass, and is about to pour it into the other.*

MRS. ALVING.

[*Holding her hand over it.*] Thanks; not for me.

OSWALD.

Oh! won't you? Then I will!

[*He empties the glass, fills, and empties it again; then he sits down by the table.*

MRS. ALVING.

[*In expectancy.*] Well?

OSWALD.

[*Without looking at her.*] Tell me—I thought you and Pastor Manders seemed so odd—so quiet—at dinner to-day.

MRS. ALVING.

Did you notice it?

OSWALD.

Yes. H'm—— [*After a short silence.*] Tell me: what do you think of Regina?

MRS. ALVING.

What do I think?

OSWALD.

Yes; isn't she splendid?

MRS. ALVING.

My dear Oswald, you don't know her as I do——

OSWALD.

Well?

MRS. ALVING.

Regina, unfortunately, was allowed to stay at home too long. I ought to have taken her earlier into my house.

OSWALD.

Yes, but isn't she splendid to look at, mother? [*He fills his glass.*

MRS. ALVING.

Regina has many serious faults——

OSWALD.

Oh, what does that matter?

[*He drinks again.*

MRS. ALVING.

But I am fond of her, nevertheless, and I am responsible for her. I wouldn't for all the world have any harm happen to her.

OSWALD.

[*Springs up.*] Mother, Regina is my only salvation!

MRS. ALVING.

[*Rising.*] What do you mean by that?

OSWALD.

I cannot go on bearing all this anguish of soul alone.

MRS. ALVING.

Have you not your mother to share it with you?

OSWALD.

Yes; that's what I thought; and so I came home to you. But that will not do. I see it won't do. I cannot endure my life here.

MRS. ALVING.

Oswald!

OSWALD.

I must live differently, mother. That is why I must leave you. I will not have you looking on at it.

MRS. ALVING.

My unhappy boy! But, Oswald, while you are so ill as this——

OSWALD.

If it were only the illness, I should stay with you, mother, you may be sure; for you are the best friend I have in the world.

MRS. ALVING.

Yes, indeed I am, Oswald; am I not?

OSWALD.

[*Wanders restlessly about.*] But it's all the torment, the gnawing remorse—and then, the great, killing dread. Oh—that awful dread!

MRS. ALVING.

[*Walking after him.*] Dread? What dread? What do you mean?

OSWALD.

Oh, you mustn't ask me any more. I don't know. I can't describe it.

MRS. ALVING.

[*Goes over to the right and pulls the bell.*]

OSWALD.

What is it you want?

MRS. ALVING.

I want my boy to be happy—that is what I want. He sha'n't go on brooding over things. [*To* REGINA, *who appears at the door:*] More champagne—a large bottle. [REGINA *goes.*

OSWALD.

Mother!

MRS. ALVING.

Do you think we don't know how to live here at home?

OSWALD.

Isn't she splendid to look at? How beautifully she's built! And so thoroughly healthy!

MRS. ALVING.

[*Sits by the table.*] Sit down, Oswald; let us talk quietly together.

OSWALD.

[*Sits.*] I daresay you don't know, mother, that I owe Regina some reparation.

MRS. ALVING.

You!

OSWALD.

For a bit of thoughtlessness, or whatever you like to call it—very innocent, at any rate. When I was home last time——

MRS. ALVING.

Well?

OSWALD.

She used often to ask me about Paris, and I used to tell her one thing and another. Then I recollect I happened to say to her one day, "Shouldn't you like to go there yourself?"

MRS. ALVING.

Well?

OSWALD.

I saw her face flush, and then she said, "Yes, I

should like it of all things." "Ah, well," I replied, "it might perhaps be managed" — or something like that.

MRS. ALVING.

And then?

OSWALD.

Of course I had forgotten all about it; but the day before yesterday I happened to ask her whether she was glad I was to stay at home so long——

MRS. ALVING.

Yes?

OSWALD.

And then she gave me such a strange look, and asked, "But what's to become of my trip to Paris?"

MRS. ALVING.

Her trip!

OSWALD.

And so it came out that she had taken the thing seriously; that she had been thinking of me the whole time, and had set to work to learn French——

MRS. ALVING.

So that was why——!

OSWALD.

Mother—when I saw that fresh, lovely, splendid girl standing there before me—till then I had hardly noticed her—but when she stood there as though with open arms ready to receive me——

MRS. ALVING.

Oswald!

OSWALD.

——then it flashed upon me that in her lay my salvation; for I saw that she was full of the joy of life.

MRS. ALVING.

[*Starts.*] The joy of life——? Can there be salvation in that?

REGINA.

[*From the dining room, with a bottle of champagne.*] I'm sorry to have been so long, but I had to go to the cellar. [*Places the bottle on the table.*

OSWALD.

And now bring another glass.

REGINA.

[*Looks at him in surprise.*] There is Mrs. Alving's glass, Mr. Alving.

OSWALD.

Yes, but bring one for yourself, Regina. [REGINA *starts and gives a lightning-like side glance at* MRS. ALVING.] Why do you wait?

REGINA.

[*Softly and hesitatingly.*] Is it Mrs. Alving's wish?

MRS. ALVING.

Bring the glass, Regina.

[REGINA *goes out into the dining-room.*

OSWALD.

[*Follows her with his eyes.*] Have you noticed how she walks?—so firmly and lightly!

MRS. ALVING.

This can never be, Oswald!

OSWALD.

It's a settled thing. Can't you see that? It's no use saying anything against it.

[REGINA *enters with an empty glass, which she keeps in her hand.*

OSWALD.

Sit down, Regina.

[REGINA *looks inquiringly at* MRS ALVING.

MRS. ALVING.

Sit down. [REGINA *sits on a chair by the dining-room door, still holding the empty glass in her hand.*] Oswald—what were you saying about the joy of life?

OSWALD.

Ah, the joy of life, mother—that's a thing you don't know much about in these parts. I have never felt it here.

MRS. ALVING.

Not when you are with me?

OSWALD.

Not when I'm at home. But you don't understand that.

MRS. ALVING.

Yes, yes; I think I almost understand it—now.

OSWALD.

And then, too, the joy of work! At bottom, it's the same thing. But that, too, you know nothing about.

MRS. ALVING.

Perhaps you are right. Tell me more about it, Oswald.

OSWALD.

I only mean that here people are brought up to believe that work is a curse and a punishment for sin, and that life is something miserable, something it would be best to have done with, the sooner the better.

MRS. ALVING.

"A vale of tears," yes; and we certainly do our best to make it one.

OSWALD.

But in the great world people won't hear of such things. There, nobody really believes such doctrines any longer. There, you feel it a positive bliss and ecstasy merely to draw the breath of life. Mother, have you noticed that everything I have painted has turned upon the joy of life?—always, always upon the joy of life?—light and sunshine and glorious air—and faces radiant with happiness. That is why I'm afraid of remaining at home with you.

MRS. ALVING.

Afraid? What are you afraid of here, with me?

OSWALD.

I'm afraid lest all my instincts should be warped into ugliness.

MRS. ALVING.

[*Looks steadily at him.*] Do you think that is what would happen?

OSWALD.

I know it. You may live the same life here as there, and yet it won't be the same life.

MRS. ALVING.

[*Who has been listening eagerly, rises, her eyes big with thought, and says:*] Now I see the sequence of things.

OSWALD.

What is it you see?

MRS. ALVING.

I see it now for the first time. And now I can speak.

OSWALD.

[*Rising.*] Mother, I don't understand you.

REGINA.

[*Who has also risen.*] Perhaps I ought to go?

MRS. ALVING.

No. Stay here. Now I can speak. Now, my boy, you shall know the whole truth. And then you can choose. Oswald! Regina!

OSWALD.

Hush! The Pastor——

MANDERS.

[*Enters by the hall door.*] There! We have had a most edifying time down there.

OSWALD.

So have we.

MANDERS.

We must stand by Engstrand and his Sailors' Home. Regina must go to him and help him——

REGINA.

No thank you, sir.

MANDERS.

[*Noticing her for the first time.*] What——? You here? And with a glass in your hand!

REGINA.

[*Hastily putting the glass down.*] *Pardon!*

OSWALD.

Regina is going with me, Mr. Manders.

MANDERS.

Going! With you!

OSWALD.

Yes; as my wife—if she wishes it.

MANDERS.

But, merciful God——!

REGINA.

I can't help it, sir.

OSWALD.

Or she'll stay here, if I stay.

REGINA.

[*Involuntarily.*] Here!

MANDERS.

I am thunderstruck at your conduct, Mrs. Alving.

MRS. ALVING.

They will do neither one thing nor the other; for now I can speak out plainly.

MANDERS.

You surely will not do that! No, no, no!

MRS. ALVING.

Yes, I can speak and I will. And no ideals shall suffer after all.

OSWALD.

Mother—what is it you are hiding from me?

REGINA.

[*Listening.*] Oh, ma'am, listen! Don't you hear shouts outside.

[*She goes into the conservatory and looks out.*

OSWALD.

[*At the window on the left.*] What's going on? Where does that light come from?

REGINA.

[*Cries out.*] The Orphanage is on fire!

MRS. ALVING.

[*Rushing to the window.*] On fire!

MANDERS.

On fire! Impossible! I've just come from there.

OSWALD.

Where's my hat? Oh, never mind it—Father's Orphanage——!

[*He rushes out through the garden door.*

MRS. ALVING.

My shawl, Regina! The whole place is in a blaze!

MANDERS.

Terrible! Mrs. Alving, it is a judgment upon this abode of lawlessness.

MRS. ALVING.

Yes, of course. Come, Regina.

[*She and* REGINA *hasten out through the hall.*

MANDERS.

[*Clasps his hands together.*] And we left it uninsured! [*He goes out the same way.*

ACT THIRD.

The room as before. All the doors stand open. The lamp is still burning on the table. It is dark out of doors; there is only a faint glow from the conflagration in the background to the left.

MRS. ALVING, *with a shawl over her head, stands in the conservatory, looking out.* REGINA, *also with a shawl on, stands a little behind her.*

MRS. ALVING.

The whole thing burnt! —burnt to the ground!

REGINA.

The basement is still burning.

MRS. ALVING.

How is it Oswald doesn't come home? There's nothing to be saved.

REGINA.

Should you like me to take down his hat to him?

MRS. ALVING.

Has he not even got his hat on?

REGINA.

[*Pointing to the hall.*] No; there it hangs

MRS. ALVING.

Let it be. He must come up now. I shall go and look for him myself.

[*She goes out through the garden door.*

MANDERS.

[*Comes in from the hall.*] Is not Mrs. Alving here?

REGINA.

She has just gone down the garden.

MANDERS.

This is the most terrible night I ever went through.

REGINA.

Yes; isn't it a dreadful misfortune, sir?

MANDERS.

Oh, don't talk about it! I can hardly bear to think of it.

REGINA.

How can it have happened——?

MANDERS.

Don't ask me, Miss Engstrand! How should *I* know? Do you, too——? Is it not enough that your father——?

REGINA.

What about him?

MANDERS.

Oh, he has driven me distracted——

ENGSTRAND.

[*Enters through the hall.*] Your Reverence——

MANDERS.

[*Turns round in terror.*] Are you after me here, too?

ENGSTRAND.

Yes, strike me dead, but I must——! Oh, Lord! what am I saying? But this is a terrible ugly business, your Reverence.

MANDERS.

[*Walks to and fro.*] Alas! alas!

REGINA.

What's the matter?

ENGSTRAND.

Why, it all came of this here prayer-meeting, you see. [*Softly.*] The bird's limed, my girl. [*Aloud.*] And to think it should be my doing that such a thing should be his Reverence's doing!

MANDERS.

But I assure you, Engstrand——

ENGSTRAND.

There wasn't another soul except your Reverence as ever laid a finger on the candles down there.

MANDERS.

[*Stops.*] So you declare. But I certainly cannot recollect that I ever had a candle in my hand.

ENGSTRAND.

And I saw as clear as daylight how your Reverence took the candle and snuffed it with your fingers, and threw away the snuff among the shavings.

MANDERS.

And you stood and looked on?

ENGSTRAND.

Yes; I saw it as plain as a pike-staff, I did.

MANDERS.

It's quite beyond my comprehension. Besides, it has never been my habit to snuff candles with my fingers.

ENGSTRAND.

And terrible risky it looked, too, that it did! But is there such a deal of harm done after all, your Reverence?

MANDERS.

[*Walks restlessly to and fro.*] Oh, don't ask me!

ENGSTRAND.

[*Walks with him.*] And your Reverence hadn't insured it, neither?

MANDERS.

[*Continuing to walk up and down.*] No, no, no; I have told you so.

ENGSTRAND.

[*Following him.*] Not insured! And then to go straight away down and set light to the whole thing! Lord, Lord, what a misfortune!

MANDERS.

[*Wipes the sweat from his forehead.*] Ay, you may well say that, Engstrand.

ENGSTRAND.

And to think that such a thing should happen

to a benevolent Institution, that was to have been a blessing both to town and country, as the saying goes! The newspapers won't be for handling your Reverence very gently, I expect.

MANDERS.

No; that is just what I am thinking of. That is almost the worst of the whole matter. All the malignant attacks and imputations——! Oh, it makes me shudder to think of it!

MRS. ALVING.

[*Comes in from the garden.*] He is not to be persuaded to leave the fire.

MANDERS.

Ah, there you are, Mrs. Alving.

MRS. ALVING.

So you have escaped your Inaugural Address, Pastor Manders.

MANDERS.

Oh, I should so gladly——

MRS. ALVING.

[*In an undertone.*] It is all for the best. That Orphanage would have done no one any good.

MANDERS.

Do you think not?

MRS. ALVING.

Do you think it would?

MANDERS.

It is a terrible misfortune, all the same.

MRS. ALVING.

Let us speak of it plainly, as a matter of business.—Are you waiting for Mr. Manders, Engstrand?

ENGSTRAND.

[*At the hall door.*] That's just what I'm a-doing of, ma'am.

MRS. ALVING.

Then sit down meanwhile.

ENGSTRAND.

Thank you, ma'am; I'd as soon stand.

MRS. ALVING.

[*To* MANDERS.] I suppose you are going by the steamer?

MANDERS.

Yes; it starts in an hour.

MRS. ALVING.

Then be so good as to take all the papers with you. I won't hear another word about this affair. I have other things to think of——

MANDERS.

Mrs. Alving——

MRS. ALVING.

Later on I shall send you a Power of Attorney to settle everything as you please.

MANDERS.

That I will very readily undertake. The original destination of the endowment must now be completely changed, alas!

MRS. ALVING.

Of course it must.

MANDERS.

I think, first of all, I shall arrange that the Solvik property shall pass to the parish. The land is by no means without value. It can always be turned to account for some purpose or other. And the interest of the money in the Bank I could, perhaps, best apply for the benefit of some undertaking of acknowledged value to the town.

MRS. ALVING.

Do just as you please. The whole matter is now completely indifferent to me.

ENGSTRAND.

Give a thought to my Sailors' Home, your Reverence.

MANDERS.

Upon my word, that is not a bad suggestion. That must be considered.

ENGSTRAND.

Oh, devil take considering—Lord forgive me!

MANDERS.

[*With a sigh.*] And unfortunately I cannot tell how long I shall be able to retain control of these things—whether public opinion may not compel me to retire. It entirely depends upon the result of the official inquiry into the fire——

MRS. ALVING.

What are you talking about?

MANDERS.

And the result can by no means be foretold.

ENGSTRAND.

[*Comes close to him.*] Ay, but it can though. For here stands old Jacob Engstrand.

MANDERS.

Well well, but——?

ENGSTRAND.

[*More softly.*] And Jacob Engstrand isn't the man to desert a noble benefactor in the hour of need, as the saying goes.

MANDERS.

Yes, but my good fellow—how——?

ENGSTRAND.

Jacob Engstrand may be likened to a sort of a guardian angel, he may, your Reverence.

MANDERS.

No, no; I really cannot accept that.

ENGSTRAND.

Oh, that'll be the way of it, all the same. I know a man as has taken others' sins upon himself before now, I do.

MANDERS.

Jacob! [*Wrings his hand.*] Yours is a rare nature. Well, you shall be helped with your Sailors' Home. That you may rely upon.

[ENGSTRAND *tries to thank him, but cannot for emotion.*

MANDERS.

[*Hangs his travelling-bag over his shoulder.*] And now let us set out. We two will go together.

ENGSTRAND.

[*At the dining-room door, softly to* REGINA.] You come along too, my lass. You shall live as snug as the yolk in an egg.

REGINA.

[*Tosses her head.*] *Merci!*

[*She goes out into the hall and fetches* MANDER'S *overcoat.*

MANDERS.

Good-bye, Mrs. Alving! and may the spirit of Law and Order descend upon this house, and that quickly.

MRS. ALVING.

Good-bye, Pastor Manders.

[*She goes up towards the conservatory, as she sees* OSWALD *coming in through the garden door.*

ENGSTRAND.

[*While he and* REGINA *help* MANDERS *to get his coat on.*] Good-bye, my child. And if any trouble should come to you, you know where Jacob Engstrand is to be found. [*Softly.*] Little Harbour Street, h'm——! [*To* MRS. ALVING *and* OSWALD.] And the refuge for wandering mariners shall be called "Chamberlain Alving's Home," that it shall! And if so be as I'm spared to carry on that house in my own way, I make so bold as to promise that it shall be worthy of the Chamberlain's memory.

MANDERS.

[*In the doorway.*] H'm—h'm!—Come along, my dear Engstrand. Good-bye! Good-bye!

[*He and* ENGSTRAND *go out through the hall.*

OSWALD.

[*Goes towards the table.*] What house was he talking about?

MRS. ALVING.

Oh, a kind of Home that he and Pastor Manders want to set up.

OSWALD.

It will burn down like the other.

MRS. ALVING.

What makes you think so?

OSWALD.

Everything will burn. All that recalls father's memory is doomed. Here am I, too, burning down. [REGINA *starts and looks at him.*

MRS. ALVING.

Oswald! You oughtn't to have remained so long down there, my poor boy.

OSWALD.

[*Sits down by the table.*] I almost think you are right.

MRS. ALVING.

Let me dry your face, Oswald; you are quite wet.

[*She dries his face with her pocket-handkerchief.*

OSWALD.

[*Stares indifferently in front of him.*] Thanks, mother.

MRS. ALVING.

Are you not tired, Oswald? Should you like to sleep?

OSWALD.

[*Nervously.*] No, no—not to sleep! I never sleep. I only pretend to. [*Sadly.*] That will come soon enough.

MRS. ALVING.

[*Looking sorrowfully at him.*] Yes, you really are ill, my blessëd boy.

REGINA.

[*Eagerly.*] Is Mr. Alving ill?

OSWALD.

[*Impatiently.*] Oh, do shut all the doors! This killing dread——

MRS. ALVING.

Close the doors, Regina.

[REGINA *shuts them and remains standing by the hall door.* MRS. ALVING *takes her shawl off.* REGINA *does the same.* MRS. ALVING *draws a chair across to* OSWALD'S, *and sits by him.*

MRS. ALVING.

There now! I am going to sit beside you——

OSWALD.

Yes, do. And Regina shall stay here too.

Regina shall be with me always. You will come to the rescue, Regina, won't you?

REGINA.

I don't understand——

MRS. ALVING.

To the rescue?

OSWALD.

Yes—when the need comes.

MRS. ALVING.

Oswald, have you not your mother to come to the rescue?

OSWALD.

You? [*Smiles.*] No, mother; that rescue you will never bring me. [*Laughs sadly.*] You! ha ha! [*Looks earnestly at her.*] Though, after all, who ought to do it if not you? [*Impetuously.*] Why can't you say "thou" to me, Regina? Why do'n't you call me "Oswald"?

REGINA.

[*Softly.*] I don't think Mrs. Alving would like it.

MRS. ALVING.

You shall have leave to, presently. And meanwhile sit over here beside us.

[REGINA *seats herself demurely and hesitatingly at the other side of the table.*

MRS. ALVING.

And now, my poor suffering boy, I am going to take the burden off your mind——

[1] "Sige du"=Fr. *tutoyer.*

OSWALD.

You, mother?

MRS. ALVING.

——all the gnawing remorse and self-reproach you speak of.

OSWALD.

And you think you can do that?

MRS. ALVING.

Yes, now I can, Oswald. A little while ago you spoke of the joy of life; and at that word a new light burst for me over my life and everything connected with it.

OSWALD.

[*Shakes his head.*] I don't understand you.

MRS. ALVING.

You ought to have known your father when he was a young lieutenant. He was brimming over with the joy of life!

OSWALD.

Yes, I know he was.

MRS. ALVING.

It was like a breezy day only to look at him. And what exuberant strength and vitality there was in him!

OSWALD.

Well——?

MRS. ALVING.

Well then, child of joy as he was—for he was like a child in those days—he had to live at home here in a half-grown town, which had no joys to offer him—only dissipations. He had no object

in life—only an official position. He had no work into which he could throw himself heart and soul; he had only business. He had not a single comrade that could realise what the joy of life meant—only loungers and boon-companions——

OSWALD.

Mother——!

MRS. ALVING.

So the inevitable happened.

OSWALD.

The inevitable?

MRS. ALVING.

You told me yourself, this evening, what would become of you if you stayed at home.

OSWALD.

Do you mean to say that father——?

MRS. ALVING.

Your poor father found no outlet for the overpowering joy of life that was in him. And I brought no brightness into his home.

OSWALD.

Not even you?

MRS. ALVING.

They had taught me a great deal about duties and so forth, which I went on obstinately believing in. Everything was marked out into duties—into my duties, and his duties, and—I am afraid I made his home intolerable for your poor father, Oswald.

OSWALD.

Why have you never spoken of this in writing to me?

MRS. ALVING.

I have never before seen it in such a light that I could speak of it to you, his son.

OSWALD.

In what light did you see it, then?

MRS. ALVING.

[*Slowly.*] I saw only this one thing: that your father was a broken-down man before you were born.

OSWALD

[*Softly.*] Ah——!

[*He rises and walks away to the window.*

MRS. ALVING.

And then, day after day, I dwelt on the one thought that by rights Regina should be at home in this house—just like my own boy.

OSWALD.

[*Turning round quickly.*] Regina——!

REGINA.

[*Springs up and asks, with bated breath.*] I——?

MRS. ALVING.

Yes, now you know it, both of you.

OSWALD.

Regina!

REGINA.

[*To herself.*] So mother was that kind of woman.

MRS. ALVING.

Your mother had many good qualities, Regina.

REGINA.

Yes, but she was one of that sort, all the same. Oh, I've often suspected it; but—— And now, if you please, ma'am, may I be allowed to go away at once?

MRS. ALVING.

Do you really wish it, Regina?

REGINA.

Yes, indeed I do.

MRS. ALVING.

Of course you can do as you like; but——

OSWALD.

[*Goes towards* REGINA.] Go away now? Your place is here.

REGINA.

Merci, Mr. Alving!—or now, I suppose, I may say Oswald. But I can tell you this wasn't at all what I expected.

MRS. ALVING.

Regina, I have not been frank with you——

REGINA.

No, that you haven't indeed. If I'd known that Oswald was an invalid, why—— And now, too, that it can never come to anything serious between us—— I really can't stop out here in

the country and wear myself out nursing sick people.

OSWALD.

Not even one who is so near to you?

REGINA.

No, that I can't. A poor girl must make the best of her young days, or she'll be left out in the cold before she knows where she is. And I, too, have the joy of life in me, Mrs. Alving!

MRS. ALVING.

Unfortunately, you have. But don't throw yourself away, Regina.

REGINA.

Oh, what must be, must be. If Oswald takes after his father, I take after my mother, I daresay.—May I ask, ma'am, if Pastor Manders knows all this about me?

MRS. ALVING.

Pastor Manders knows all about it.

REGINA.

[*Busied in putting on her shawl.*] Well then, I'd better make haste and get away by this steamer. The Pastor is such a nice man to deal with; and I certainly think I've as much right to a little of that money as he has—that brute of a carpenter.

MRS. ALVING.

You are heartily welcome to it, Regina.

REGINA.

[*Looks hard at her.*] I think you might have

brought me up as a gentleman's daughter, ma'am; it would have suited me better. [*Tosses her head.*] But pooh—what does it matter! [*With a bitter side glance at the corked bottle.*] I may come to drink champagne with gentlefolks yet.

MRS. ALVING.

And if you ever need a home, Regina, come to me.

REGINA.

No, thank you, ma'am. Pastor Manders will look after me, I know. And if the worst comes to the worst, I know of one house where I've every right to a place.

MRS. ALVING.

Where is that?

REGINA.

"Chamberlain Alving's Home."

MRS. ALVING.

Regina—now I see it—you are going to your ruin.

REGINA.

Oh, stuff! Good-bye.

[*She nods and goes out through the hall.*

OSWALD.

[*Stands at the window and looks out.*] Is she gone?

MRS. ALVING.

Yes.

OSWALD.

[*Murmuring aside to himself.*] I think it was a mistake, this.

MRS. ALVING.

[*Goes up behind him and lays her hands on his shoulders.*] Oswald, my dear boy—has it shaken you very much?

OSWALD

[*Turns his face towards her.*] All that about father, do you mean?

MRS. ALVING.

Yes, about your unhappy father. I am so afraid it may have been too much for you.

OSWALD.

Why should you fancy that? Of course it came upon me as a great surprise; but it can make no real difference to me.

MRS. ALVING.

[*Draws her hands away.*] No difference! That your father was so infinitely unhappy!

OSWALD.

Of course I can pity him, as I would anybody else; but——

MRS. ALVING.

Nothing more! Your own father!

OSWALD.

[*Impatiently.*] Oh, "father,"—"father"! I never knew anything of father. I remember nothing about him, except that he once made me sick.

MRS. ALVING.

This is terrible to think of! Ought not a son to love his father, whatever happens?

OSWALD.

When a son has nothing to thank his father for? has never known him? Do you really cling to that old superstition?—you who are so enlightened in other ways?

MRS. ALVING.

Can it be only a superstition——?

OSWALD.

Yes; surely you can see that, mother. It's one of those notions that are current in the world, and so——

MRS. ALVING.

[*Deeply moved.*] Ghosts!

OSWALD.

[*Crossing the room.*] Yes; you may call them ghosts.

MRS. ALVING.

[*Wildly.*] Oswald—then you don't love me, either!

OSWALD.

You I know, at any rate——

MRS. ALVING.

Yes, you know me; but is that all!

OSWALD.

And, of course, I know how fond you are of me, and I can't but be grateful to you. And then you can be so useful to me, now that I am ill.

MRS. ALVING.

Yes, cannot I, Oswald? Oh, I could almost bless

the illness that has driven you home to me. For I see very plainly that you are not mine: I have to win you.

OSWALD.

[*Impatiently.*] Yes yes yes; all these are just so many phrases. You must remember that I am a sick man, mother. I can't be much taken up with other people; I have enough to do thinking about myself.

MRS. ALVING.

[*In a low voice.*] I shall be patient and easily satisfied.

OSWALD.

And cheerful too, mother!

MRS. ALVING.

Yes, my dear boy, you are quite right. [*Goes towards him.*] Have I relieved you of all remorse and self-reproach now?

OSWALD.

Yes, you have. But now who will relieve me of the dread?

MRS. ALVING.

The dread?

OSWALD.

[*Walks across the room.*] Regina could have been got to do it.

MRS. ALVING.

I don't understand you. What is this about dread—and Regina?

OSWALD.

Is it very late, mother?

MRS. ALVING.

It is early morning. [*She looks out through the conservatory.*] The day is dawning over the mountains. And the weather is clearing, Oswald. In a little while you shall see the sun.

OSWALD.

I'm glad of that. Oh, I may still have much to rejoice in and live for——

MRS. ALVING.

I should think so, indeed!

OSWALD.

Even if I can't work——

MRS. ALVING.

Oh, you'll soon be able to work again, my dear boy—now that you haven't got all those gnawing and depressing thoughts to brood over any longer.

OSWALD.

Yes, I'm glad you were able to rid me of all those fancies. And when I've got over this one thing more—— [*Sits on the sofa.*] Now we will have a little talk, mother——

MRS. ALVING.

Yes, let us.

[*She pushes an arm-chair towards the sofa, and sits down close to him.*

OSWALD.

And meantime the sun will be rising. And then you will know all. And then I shall not feel this dread any longer.

MRS. ALVING.

What is it that I am to know?

OSWALD.

[*Not listening to her.*] Mother, did you not say a little while ago, that there was nothing in the world you would not do for me, if I asked you?

MRS. ALVING.

Yes, indeed I said so!

OSWALD.

And you'll stick to it, mother?

MRS. ALVING.

You may rely on that, my dear and only boy! I have nothing in the world to live for but you alone.

OSWALD.

Very well, then; now you shall hear—— Mother, you have a strong, steadfast mind, I know. Now you're to sit quite still when you hear it.

MRS. ALVING.

What dreadful thing can it be——?

OSWALD.

You're not to scream out. Do you hear? Do you promise me that? We will sit and talk about it quietly. Do you promise me, mother?

MRS. ALVING.

Yes, yes; I promise. Only speak!

OSWALD.

Well, you must know that all this fatigue—and

my inability to think of work—all that is not the illness itself——

MRS. ALVING.

Then what is the illness itself?

OSWALD.

The disease I have as my birthright—[*He points to his forehead and adds very softly*]—is seated here.

MRS. ALVING.

[*Almost voiceless.*] Oswald! No—no!

OSWALD.

Don't scream. I can't bear it. Yes, mother, it is seated here—waiting. And it may break out any day—at any moment.

MRS. ALVING.

Oh, what horror——!

OSWALD.

Now, quiet, quiet. That is how it stands with me——

MRS. ALVING.

[*Springs up.*] It's not true, Oswald! It's impossible! It cannot be so!

OSWALD.

I have had one attack down there already. It was soon over. But when I came to know the state I had been in, then the dread descended upon me, raging and ravening; and so I set off home to you as fast as I could.

MRS. ALVING.

Then this is the dread——!

OSWALD.

Yes — it's so indescribably loathsome, you know. Oh, if it had only been an ordinary mortal disease——! For I'm not so afraid of death—though I should like to live as long as I can.

MRS. ALVING.

Yes, yes, Oswald, you must!

OSWALD.

But this is so unutterably loathsome. To become a little baby again! To have to be fed! To have to—— Oh, it's not to be spoken of!

MRS. ALVING.

The child has his mother to nurse him.

OSWALD.

[*Springs up.*] No, never that! That is just what I will not have. I can't endure to think that perhaps I should lie in that state for many years—and get old and grey. And in the meantime you might die and leave me. [*Sits in* MRS. ALVING'S *chair.*] For the doctor said it wouldn't necessarily prove fatal at once. He called it a sort of softening of the brain—or something like that. [*Smiles sadly.*] I think that expression sounds so nice. It always sets me thinking of cherry-coloured velvet — something soft and delicate to stroke.

MRS. ALVING.

[*Shrieks.*] Oswald!

OSWALD.

[*Springs up and paces the room.*] And now you have taken Regina from me. If I could only have had her! She would have come to the rescue, I know.

MRS. ALVING.

[*Goes to him.*] What do you mean by that, my darling boy? Is there any help in the world that I would not give you?

OSWALD.

When I got over my attack in Paris, the doctor told me that when it comes again—and it will come—there will be no more hope.

MRS. ALVING.

He was heartless enough to——

OSWALD.

I demanded it of him. I told him I had preparations to make—— [*He smiles cunningly.*] And so I had. [*He takes a little box from his inner breast pocket and opens it.*] Mother, do you see this?

MRS. ALVING.

What is it?

OSWALD.

Morphia.

MRS. ALVING.

[*Looks at him horror-struck.*] Oswald—my boy

OSWALD.

I've scraped together twelve pilules——

MRS. ALVING.

[*Snatches at it.*] Give me the box, Oswald.

OSWALD.

Not yet, mother.

[*He hides the box again in his pocket.*

MRS. ALVING.

I shall never survive this!

OSWALD.

It must be survived. Now if I'd had Regina here, I should have told her how things stood with me—and begged her to come to the rescue at the last. She would have done it. I know she would.

MRS. ALVING.

Never!

OSWALD.

When the horror had come upon me, and she saw me lying there helpless, like a little new-born baby, impotent, lost, hopeless—past all saving——

MRS. ALVING.

Never in all the world would Regina have done this!

OSWALD.

Regina would have done it. Regina was so splendidly light-hearted. And she would soon have wearied of nursing an invalid like me.

MRS. ALVING.

Then heaven be praised that Regina is not here

OSWALD.

Well then, it is you that must come to the rescue, mother.

MRS. ALVING.

[*Shrieks aloud.*] I!

OSWALD.

Who should do it if not you?

MRS. ALVING.

I! your mother!

OSWALD.

For that very reason.

MRS. ALVING.

I, who gave you life!

OSWALD.

I never asked you for life. And what sort of a life have you given me? I will not have it! You shall take it back again!

MRS. ALVING.

Help! Help! [*She runs out into the hall.*

OSWALD.

[*Going after her.*] Do not leave me! Where are you going?

MRS. ALVING.

[*In the hall.*] To fetch the doctor, Oswald! Let me pass!

OSWALD.

[*Also outside.*] You shall not go out. And no one shall come in. [*The locking of a door is heard.*

MRS. ALVING.

[*Comes in again.*] Oswald! Oswald—my child!

OSWALD.

[*Follows her.*] Have you a mother's heart for me

—and yet can see me suffer from this unutterable dread?

MRS. ALVING.

[*After a moment's silence, commands herself, and says:*] Here is my hand upon it.

OSWALD.

Will you——?

MRS. ALVING.

If it should ever be necessary. But it will never be necessary. No, no; it is impossible.

OSWALD.

Well, let us hope so. And let us live together as long as we can. Thank you, mother.

[*He seats himself in the arm-chair which* MRS. ALVING *has moved to the sofa. Day is breaking. The lamp is still burning on the table.*

MRS. ALVING.

[*Drawing near cautiously.*] Do you feel calm now?

OSWALD.

Yes.

MRS. ALVING.

[*Bending over him.*] It has been a dreadful fancy of yours, Oswald—nothing but a fancy. All this excitement has been too much for you. But now you shall have a long rest; at home with your mother, my own blessëd boy. Everything you point to you shall have, just as when you were a little child.—There now. The crisis is over. You see how easily it passed! Oh, I was sure it would. —And do you see, Oswald, what a lovely day we

are going to have? Brilliant sunshine! Now you can really see your home.

[*She goes to the table and puts out the lamp. Sunrise. The glacier and the snow-peaks in the background glow in the morning light.*

OSWALD.

[*Sits in the arm-chair with his back towards the landscape, without moving. Suddenly he says:*] Mother, give me the sun.

MRS. ALVING.

[*By the table, starts and looks at him.*] What do you say?

OSWALD.

[*Repeats, in a dull, toneless voice.*] The sun. The sun.

MRS. ALVING.

[*Goes to him.*] Oswald, what is the matter with you?

OSWALD.

[*Seems to shrink together in the chair; all his muscles relax; his face is expressionless, his eyes have a glassy stare.*]

MRS. ALVING.

[*Quivering with terror.*] What is this? [*Shrieks.*] Oswald! what is the matter with you? [*Falls on her knees beside him and shakes him.*] Oswald! Oswald! look at me! Don't you know me?

OSWALD.

[*Tonelessly as before.*] The sun.—The sun.

MRS. ALVING.

[*Springs up in despair, entwines her hands in her*

hair and shrieks.] I cannot bear it! [*Whispers, as though petrified*]; I cannot bear it! Never! [*Suddenly.*] Where has he got them? [*Fumbles hastily in his breast.*] Here! [*Shrinks back a few steps and screams;*] No; no; no!—Yes!—No; no!

[*She stands a few steps away from him with her hands twisted in her hair, and stares at him in speechless horror.*

OSWALD.

[*Sits motionless as before and says.*] The sun.—The sun.

THE END.